

TWO DIALOGUES,
CONCERNING
THE MANNER
OF WRITING
HISTORY.

From the FRENCH of

ABBÉ DE MABLY.

Bonnot de Mably (G.)

L O N D O N :

Printed for G. KEARSLEY, in FLEET-STREET.

M.DCC.LXXXIII.

TWO DIALOGUES

THE EARL OF ABERGOMERY
CONCERNING
A COUNTRY OF THE WORLD

THE MAIN LINE
- A SPIRITED AND VIVIDLY ADVOCATE
IN THE MOST INTERESTING MANNER

OF THE
MAINTENANCE OF THOSE RIGHTS
WHICH ARE THE
RIGHTS OF THE
(TOO OFTEN WITHHOLDEN)



A DISCOURSE
FROM THE
TO ALL THE
OF THE

ABBE DE MABILL

WRITTEN IN THE

WITH THE DEAREST GRATITUDE AND RESPECT
L O N D O N
PRINTED BY

Printed by G. Kearsley, in Fleet Street.
THE TRANSLATOR

MILCOLETT

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A

TWO DIALOGUES

ON WRITING

H I S T O R Y.

(Price Three Shillings, *sewed.*)

B

TWO DIALOGUES

CONCERNING

THE MANNER

OF WRITING
TWO DIALOGUES

HISTORICAL



HISTORICAL

ABRIDGED

(Price Three Shillings, bound.)

Printed for G. Kearsley, in Fleet-Street.

M. C. C. C. C. C.

TO THE READER.

THE reputation of this author is too firmly established in the literary world to need the least support from panegyric. His name alone prefixed to a performance is of itself sufficient to excite the public curiosity. He has instructively and agreeably gratified it, on many former occasions; and in the present instance, those points are totally attained. But there is something more—he launches into singularities without steering from the rectitude of criticism; and whilst he throws their beauties into brilliant lights, he frequently developes, with a bold, but skilful hand, the *dangerous* variety of errors and misrepresentations of the chief ancient and modern Historians. Three of the most *particular* objects of his animadversions, amongst the last, are Mr. HUME, Doctor ROBERTSON, and Mr. GIBBON! In a word, this Work (*which cannot fail to prove of service to great public Schools and Universities*) is a noble monument of well-directed zeal in the support of HUMAN LIBERTY and VIRTUE.

FOR THE READER.

THE reputation of the author is too firmly established in the literary world to need the least support from party. His name alone promised to a performance of this kind to excite the public curiosity. His was instinctively and agreeably grounded in, on many former occasions; and in the present instance, the points are totally at issue. The theme is a burning one—the religious and political opinions which have sprung from the reign of darkness, and which he shows their bearing on our present light, in a judiciously developed, with a bold, but fitted hand, the vigorous variety of errors and misapprehensions of the chief authors and modern luminaries. I place of the most prominent objects of his animadversions, among the last, are MR. HELME, Doctor ROBERTSON, and MR. GILBERT. In a word, this work (which cannot fail to prove of service to every reader) is a noble monument of well directed sagacity, the support of HUMAN LIBERTY, and VIRTUE.

TO
THE EARL OF ABINGDON,
A CITIZEN OF THE WORLD,

IN THE NOBLEST SENSE OF THE EXPRESSION;

2 - A SPIRITED AND VIRTUOUS ADVOCATE

FOR THE

2.7 MAINTENANCE OF THOSE SACRED RIGHTS

WHICH KINGS AND MINISTERS OF EVERY AGE

(TOO OFTEN WITH IMPUNITY !)

HAVE DARED TO VIOLATE ;

AND

A DISINTERESTED AND ACTIVE FRIEND

TO ALL THE JUST LIBERTIES OF MANKIND,

THIS WORK,

WRITTEN IN THEIR DEFENCE,

IS

WITH THE DEEPEST GRATITUDE AND RESPECT,

INSCRIBED BY

THE TRANSLATOR.

THE EARL OF ARLINGTON.
TO THE READER.
A CITIZEN OF THE WORLD.

IN THE NOBLEST SENSE OF THE EXPRESSION;

TA SPIRITED AND VIRTUOUS ADVOCATE,
established in the literature of the age, to need the least
support from party. His name alone was
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to a performance of which, in the
of every King and Ministers of every Age
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(too often with impunity) to
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particular objects of his animadversions amongst
WRITTEN IN THEIR DEFENCE, RICHARDSON,
the last, are Mr. Gibbon, Mr. Burke, and Mr. Gibbon.
and Mr. Gibbon, as is said, this Work (which
with the deepest gratitude and respect,
and LIBERTY

and VIRTUE, THE TRANSLATOR.

CONCERNING THE MANNER

OF WRITING

H I S T O R Y.

EUGENIUS TO CLEANTHES.

PERMIT me to lay before you the particulars of a conversation at once interesting and novel. You must not be alarmed. I do assure you that you have no reason to dread, lest you should find in it some mention of our

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war

war against the English. Not a single syllable of either *their* interests, or those of the French, the Spaniards, or the Americans will occur throughout the dialogues which are submitted to your serious consideration. I have not forgotten how much your patience was wearied out by the perpetually repeated accounts of engagements between frigates and armed vessels ; as if the fate of a battle of Actium depended upon the victory acquired by either one party or the other ; and, therefore, I will not disturb the sweet tranquility of your retirement. Pursue your own thoughts. They must always have a claim to my respect ; nor shall I once venture to interrupt them, whilst we only meditate and prepare for triumphs. But, when, at length, the combined naval force of France and Spain shall have secured to both, by a decisive conquest, an empire on the ocean ; and when we shall have reduced the pride of Great Britain to the necessity of acknowledging our power, and have brought

brought her to the full conviction that she is //
 not superior to America; then, Cleanthes!
 take care of yourself. Then, my promise of
 leaving you in unmolested solitude will prove
 no longer binding; and I shall salute you
 with a full discharge of my political artillery.
 Then, questions will follow upon questions.
 What laws shall we impose on humbled Eng- //
 land? Will not the truest knowledge of our //
 interests suggest to us the good policy of act- //
 ing with a generous moderation? Reserving //
 my reflections upon the subject until the arri- //
 val of that event which, certainly, must intro- //
 duce an actual Revolution in the two Worlds, //
 and apprehensive of proceeding to premature
 investigations, lest the caprice of fortune should
 derange them, I have as yet confined my
 studies to the walks of literature.

Not long after we had lost the pleasure of
 your company, and at my next entrance into
 that grove, which your presence and conver-

fation had so much endeared to me, I was ac-
 costed by our friends, Cidamon and Theodosius.
 The discourse at once became so singular and
 interesting, and made so lively an impression
 upon my memory, that (I believe) no time
 can, possibly, erase it. Under these circum-
 stances, I may venture to assure you that I
 transmit to you almost verbatim a narrative of
 the whole which passed between us.

EUGENIUS.

THE

THE FIRST DIALOGUE.

CONCERNING

*The different kinds of History. The studies which
are the necessary preparatives for writing it.
General and universal Histories.*

CIDAMON.

EUGENIUS! I am rejoiced to meet you.
This is the very interview I wished for. With
your aid, we may, perhaps, cure Theodosius
of his indolence; or, rather of that attach-
ment to variety which, inclining him to skim
over the surface of every species of literature,
has rendered his great abilities of little use. I
tell him seriously that he continues too long a
youth; and that, having reached his thirtieth

year, he should not flutter from one object to another, and indulge the wild caprices of his mind ; but, choosing his particular study, continue fixed, and suffer it to engross his whole attention. Unless he binds himself to this rule, he may fall nearly into total ignorance, amidst his endeavors to know a little of every thing. The divided application of the human understanding insensibly accustoms it to yield to all resistance ; to glance only upon the superficies of important matters, and, consequently, to become tired too early, and, at length, incapable of making those deep and necessary reflections which can alone invigorate and preserve exalted talents. The brilliancy of a fine imagination deserves rather our pity than our envy, when it is employed, during a whole life, in wasting all its strength on mere flourishes which, limited to trifles, bring nothing forth of real value. The fruits of Autumn should succeed the flowers of the Spring. . . . But, I have the pleasure to perceive that my observations are not lost upon Theodosius. He must permit me to advise him to write History, and to undertake a
work

work of consequence. Eugenius! be you my Second; and I have no doubt but that he will at length yield to our solicitations.

THEODOSIUS.

Perhaps, this levity, of which my friend Cidamon disapproves, is a convincing evidence that I have no talents absolutely equal to the arduous task of writing well on any subject whatsoever. I confess that running over the different kinds of literature, whether poetry, eloquence, or history, I have felt considerable pleasure in sacrificing to each some hours of every day. Having read much, I was even tempted to take up the pen. I sank under the enterprize. But, indeed, I have never experienced that secret charm which, when nature has endued us with the real and the proper talents, *must* captivate us, in spite of all resistance. Should I not, therefore, conclude that it rather becomes me to rest satisfied with reaping instruction from the literary labors of others, and not aspire to the honor of attracting the attention of readers, by struggling

either to instruct or entertain them? But, to oblige Cidamon, I am determined to make one effort, and to undertake (if it must be so) the relation of some great æra in History, on condition that you promise me, upon your honor, to try, by the severest laws of criticism, the first sheets of my attempt; at once to undeceive me, should I presume to form too favorable an opinion of my powers; and to prevent me from adding, in my own person, to the number of those historians, described by Juvenal, who heap volumes upon volumes, and are, at best, a set of dull and miserable compilers. Where, then, shall I find the heroes whose achievements are to form the groundwork of my narration? Point out to me some unfortunate State of which I, probably, may be condemned to strive to give a likeness in my own daubings. The ancient History would please me much, as presenting to us Men with a noble air of grandeur of which the moderns are absolutely destitute. But, writers of such exalted genius have investigated these subjects that the endeavor to bring them forward under fresh points of view would prove temerity in

in the extreme. Will you answer for it that, whilst I labour to draw the resemblance of *such* personages, I shall not either throw them into unnatural and forced attitudes, or leave them without a single spark of animation? Shall I be more fortunate than the painters who have exposed at the *Louvre* Hector and Pompilius? I must turn, therefore, into the paths of modern History where the general appearance of characters, exceedingly inferior to the Greeks and Romans does not require these bold, strong and lively touches which were necessary to Thucydides and Livy. Would you advise me to limit my researches to a particular reign, or to some memorable event? I will try to ransack all the tedious matter in our chronicles. I will pore, should it be necessary, over musty manuscripts. I will seek for truth through that obscurity in which so often she remains enveloped. Come! my friends! determine! favour me with your opinions, and I will follow them. They are my laws.

EUGENIUS.

My dear Theodosius! you embarrass me not a little. Nothing is more easy than to give general directions; but the great difficulty lies in determining upon that part which should be taken in preference to another. Cidamon, who seems, indeed, resolved to have you an Historian, would, doubtless, hesitate to tell you what kind of history he is desirous that you should undertake. You have extorted from us our words of honor that we should criticise your labors with unrestrained severity. For my own part, I promise you that I will; and, as one instance of my freedom, let me acknowledge to you that, in spite even of my admiration of your genius and understanding, I am without the power of guessing to what literary pursuit your taste for writing would incline you.

The Historian, like the Poet and the Orator, must be *born*; not *made*. The genius which must form them is the gift of nature,
and

and cannot spring alone from education. If, when perusing the writings of the great historians, you have not felt that something like a spirit of emulation began to take possession of your mind; if the paintings of Livy, of Sallust, and of Tacitus have not inspired you with enthusiasm, I should not (and I hope Cidamon will forgive me when I differ from him in opinion) I should not then advise you to undertake the task of an Historian; because, notwithstanding that your abilities would support you throughout a work of elegance and even force of reasoning, you must prove incapable of imparting to it that life which can alone render it as useful as agreeable.

Granting that you were born an Historian, no person can know better than yourself what kind of history you ought to write. Recollect what particular ideas have made the greatest impression upon your mind whilst you read over the accomplished models of the art. If, for example, you have naturally and, as it were by instinct, rivetted your whole attention upon the particular details of Livy
which

which serve to unravel and exhibit in a striking form the genius of the Romans; if the description of the laws has powerfully engaged your notice; and if the picture of revolutions, which intervened amidst the government of the republic, has thrown you into a train of serious and deep reflections, you may relinquish all diffidence and distrust of the successful vigor of your talents, and enter upon a general History. Have no circumstances affected you so much as the wars of the Romans, their military discipline, and the achievements of their Consuls? Then, write only the history of some memorable war which may have changed the fortune of the contending states. If, more interested by the various workings of the human heart, you have particularly contemplated the passions, the vices and the virtues of those men whose conduct or whose administration has been explained to you, tread in the steps of Plutarch, and strive to enlighten and to amend us by presenting to us the faithful portraits of distinguished characters, whose abilities have done honor to hu-

humanity, and whose lives we should consider as an instructive lesson to us for ever.

Different kinds of History require different talents and perceptions. Consult your strength (is the advice of Horace and Boileau to young poets) and do not strive to raise a load the weight of which you have not power to support. This advice applies with equal force to all writers whatsoever; nor is it possible too strictly to avoid forming such a judgment concerning the propriety of undertaking any work, as must arise merely from our ideas of the importance and the dignity of the subject. Let us rigidly examine into the nature and the force of our abilities, and always fear that these may be exaggerated by our vanity. If Anacreon and Catullus, yielding to the dictates of an absurd and arrogant opinion of themselves, had disdained to pay the least attention to those agreeable trifles which have not merely amused but covered them with the brilliancy of poetical reputation, and tried to blow the trumpet of Calliope, and wield the dagger of Melpomene, they must have made themselves the
ob-

objects of contempt and ridicule. A similar reflection is not less applicable to Historians. What a fund of knowledge, what a diversity of talents, of which neither Tacitus nor Sallust stood in need, was requisite for Livy ! Amidst the annals of history, an immense multitude of characters arise, of which the resemblance can only be marked out by different pencils and by different colors. Following the Romans through all their progress and all their revolutions, Livy must lay open the variety of causes and connections. To attract the reader, he must paint all the passions, and, in succession, the virtues or the vices which have either elevated or destroyed the grandeur of the Romans. You perceive, then, Theodosius ! that this vast genius, which embraces every object, was not necessary to Sallust, in order that he might perfectly describe the Conspiracy of Cataline and the war of Jugurtha.

I might observe as much of Tacitus who, having excelled in portraying the dark passions of Tiberius, the imbecility of Claudius,
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the wickedness of Nero, the intrigues of the Freemen who governed, and the baseness of a Senate either yielding to the impulse of fear or sacrificing their talents and their virtues to obtain the favor of their prince, would not, perhaps, have discovered the secret springs which worked upon the circumstances that introduced the various fortunes of the Romans, since he seems to have been destitute of the least foresight of their ruin, which was prepared and absolutely announced by the despotism of the successors of Augustus. Concerning Plutarch, I can venture to pronounce opinions much more decisive. He is a perfect pattern of historic writing when the subject of his labors stands confined solely to the life of some illustrious person. He always paints the Man and Hero, in the same moment. He places before our eyes, he dissects and lays open for us his very soul; he unravels all those intricate emotions which push it into action; and he lights up within us the love of whatsoever has a claim to praise, and is at once beautiful and sublime. Yet, this Historian, whose equal we, perhaps, shall never see,

see, most certainly, had not abilities and genius sufficient to have enabled him to write a general History of Greece. In the whole body of society, the passions have a kind of play, a progress, and those varieties of caprice which are more difficult to follow; and which he does not constantly develop with equal penetration and sagacity. There is great reason to imagine that, for want of the assistance of certain principles of natural and political law, he would not have enjoyed the power of entering upon, and proceeding, with a pre-eminence like that of Thucidides, through the recital of either the war of Peleponesus, or some memorable incident of a similar complexion.

And, here, Theodosius! let us pause a moment. Previous to our remarks concerning those different kinds of history which call, of course, for different abilities, permit me to take the liberty of asking you whether you have engaged in the preparatory studies with which no excellent historian can possibly dispense? Have you turned your close attention

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to natural law? If you have not traced out the origin of public power in society, and the duties of Man in his capacity of Citizen and Magistrate; if you remain ignorant of the reciprocal laws and duties of nations towards each other, acquaint me by what rule you mean to form a judgment of either the justice or the injustice of those enterprizes which you select as subjects for your history. If an intestine broil should break out within the State, between the Monarch and his People, you must, if not endued with this important knowledge, decide upon it in complaisance to vulgar prejudices; and favorite errors would press upon your mind with all the force of an established truth. You would tell us, with Father Orleans, that, *when we consider the power of the Kings of England, we discover that none is more absolute and more arbitrary, because it is founded upon the right of conquest.* From this first absurdity, reduced to principle, is it not natural that a false, ridiculous and dangerous doctrine should spread itself through all the pages of your history. You will disgust all readers of enlightened understandings, whether they con-

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sider you as practising the abject arts of flattery, or lost in ignorance. All others you would deceive : and History, which Cicero styles *Magistra Vitæ*, would lead us into those errors which it should teach us to avoid. To readers possessed of little penetration (and, under this class, may we rank at least the generality of mankind) you would become the more a dangerous guide, as having written in a pleasing style, and scattered through your history some common-place remarks concerning trifling and domestic manners. I call them trifling and domestic ; because, without the aid of natural law, it is not possible to rise to such a point as to discover what are the duties of a citizen, and a magistrate ; and what those great and finished virtues of which the name is scarcely known to us, and which we are almost accustomed to consider as chimeras. Indeed, Theodosius ! it is a shameful waste of time so to write History as to convert it into poison : like Strada, who, sacrificing the dignity of the Low Countries to that of the court of Spain, invites their natives to a state of slavery ; and thus, makes preparations for the progress and the

the establishment of despotism. Could we rely upon this Historian, we should conceive that Philip the Second enjoyed an actual right to trample under foot all ancient laws, all treaties, and all conventions with his subjects, because *he held his crown from GOD!* Thus, did this dangerous Casuist sentence the Low-Countries to bear with patience the destruction of their privileges, and the most barbarous oppression, rather than plunge into the guilt of sacrilegious disobedience!

I know not whether I am mistaken; but it appears to me that, either to this ignorance of natural law, or to the abject disposition of the majority of the historians of the present age, which, driving them into a rebellion against the feelings of their conscience, has forced them to flatter princes, we owe the disgusting insipidity of their writings. Why is Grotius superior to such authors as these? Because he has investigated to their lowest depth the laws and duties of society; and, therefore, do we trace in him the elevation and the energy of the ancients. I seize with eagerness; I could devour

devour his History of the Low-Countries; whilst the work of Strada, whose abilities were, probably, more equal to the power of entering into fine relations, is always dropping from my hands. Let me give you another example, from Buchanan, of the forcible effect of that study concerning which I am now speaking to you. An attentive and well digested perusal of his learned and sagacious production intituled : *De jure regis apud Scotos*, will not leave us in the least surprized that this writer (the only person amongst his contemporaries who knew how to think, as Locke has since thought, and, doubtless, in imitation of Buchanan) should have composed an History which presses forward with that air of grandeur, liberality and elevation which easily inclines us to excuse those defects of order and congruity with which, otherwise, we might reproach him.

To this study of the natural must we join that of the political law. But, give me leave to observe to you that the political law is absolutely twofold. It first arises upon the basis
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of those laws which nature has established in order to procure for human-kind that happiness of which she renders them susceptible. These laws are, like herself, invariable; and fortunate would it have proved for all the world, if they had been religiously obeyed. The second political law originates from those passions which have seduced our reason; and the fruits of this law are merely transient advantages, too often subject to a variety of painful and unfortunate interruptions. It is necessary, at the outset, to examine into the principles of the first law, which will serve us as the standard by which we may discover what states are either more or less removed from that point of consummation which it becomes them to endeavour to obtain. But, this development will elude our search, unless we deeply study the various emotions of the human heart, and observe with strictest care the manner in which we feel ourselves affected by the objects that surround us. This study is too difficult and tedious to inspire us with hopes of making in it a successful and extensive progress, unless we borrow succors from the philosophers of a former

former age. In *their* writings, we shall perceive what is the happiness to which it, certainly, behoves us to aspire. We shall discover the nature of those means by which the most enlightened lawgivers have striven to establish this happiness in their Republics.

THEODOSIUS.

Here, I *must* take the liberty to interrupt you. Is it possible that you can gravely recommend a serious perusal of the absurdities of Plato, of Sir Thomas More, and of that innumerable tribe of dreamers who wildly wrote concerning politics which, probably, were never known; and which, beyond a doubt, could not prove useful to an historian; because the most ancient monuments of history have already represented to us societies in a state of deprivation to which it is not possible to apply one single principle of all this *fine* philosophy. How, then, can we draw from it the least assistance?

EUGENIUS.

This argument shall not avail you; nor will I yield a tittle of my point. I not only sentence the historian to peruse the writings of these *dreamers* (as you are pleased to call them), but I even condemn him to the task of meditating upon their remarks until they shall have appeared to him as a series of indubitable truths. I grant that the empire of the passions is scarcely less ancient than the empire of the world, and that it, certainly, will prove as lasting; but, you, on your part, must confess that each society which has experienced the commotions, the disorders, and the afflictions that arise from them, engaged continually in efforts for the re-establishment of security, of union, and of peace. On this account, the passions were in motion; and hence originated foreign and domestic wars; parties; factions; all the laws and all the different forms of government which have succeeded one another. From this source has flowed the destruction of empires, and even of those new states

states which were elevated upon their ruins to sink at length under the same fate. This is the picture which the historian should present to us ; not to satisfy an idle curiosity, but to supply for us what is wanting of experience ; to make us prudent ; to teach us how to avoid the same calamities ; and to furnish us with a compass for our steerage on this tempestuous and boundless ocean. Now, let me ask you, Theodosius ! whether it be possible for the Historian to execute this essential duty, previous to the acquisitions of what Lucian, in his *Manner of writing History*, styles the science, or the art of administration ? Were I not to carry my researches up to the primitive views of nature, I should bring forward, as so many incontestible and salutary principles, the caprices, the prejudices, and the errors of the passions ; and can you seriously suppose that, imitating the rulers and the legislators who, during the first ages of the world, misled mankind, I could attain to that political knowledge which Lucian has required in Historians. If, studying the nature of my fellow-creatures, I do not go up to the source
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of either our happiness or our misery; if I do not unravel the character of our virtues and of our vices; and if, amidst my contemplations on the subject, I do not discover by what wonderful springs our virtues conciliate the interests of all the citizens, throw open their talents and multiply the powers of society; whilst vices, on the contrary, enfeeble and divide them, smother their abilities, and render them the sport of fortune, I must, as the natural result of having been myself deceived, deceive my readers. I, then, should really admire those ministers and magistrates who, not observing the pit which they were digging under their feet, have, sometimes, succeeded in extending the empire of the passions: I should applaud their errors; and lend, like them, a captivating mask to vice. Surely, it were better to leave my pen at rest, than take it up for such unworthy purposes as these.

I can discover, Theodosius! in your countenance that you have, in readiness, an objection to these remarks. I guess the nature of it. You would remind me that the ancient

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Lawgivers, of whom we most admire the wisdom, were unable, even during ages much happier than our own, to regulate the manners and the virtues of their fellow-citizens by the standard of those politics to which I have alluded; and you would, therefore, ask how this standard can prove serviceable to ourselves? I grant that, perceiving the violent competitorships, the dissensions and the animosities which bad laws and corrupt morals had introduced into these Republics, those great men were in the right whilst, not struggling absolutely to stem the torrent, they gave a little way, in order the more effectually to destroy some evil, and to enter upon the production of some good. I applaud Lycurgus for having left even a portion of their vices uninterrupted amongst the Spartans, persuaded as I am that if he had attempted to render them quite perfect, he would not have succeeded in making them the wisest of mankind!

THEODOSIUS.

Do you imagine that you could find a reader who would not conclude that the Historian
was

was in his dotage, if he should preach up so strange a code of politics? And why, following the example of the wisest Legislators, must he not yield to the torrent which drives him forward?

EUGENIUS.

Why? because the mind revolts against that law for which it is not in the least prepared; and because a skilful Legislator will soothe our weakness in the moment that he endeavors to correct it; perpetually mindful that it is his duty not to approach us in the character of a tyrant. On the contrary, an Historian can never reprimand us too sharply for our prejudices, our errors, and our vices. *His* philosophy will not create either uneasiness or disorder. Upon fools it will be absolutely lost; corrupted hearts will, certainly, deride it; but, by degrees, it will familiarize all good minds to truth; it will mark out to them their several wants; and incline them (if it be yet possible to attain the point) not to refuse taking any of those remedies which are requisite.

The Historian, having once rendered himself Master of this political Law of Nature, will have a clue to guide his steps, and to prevent his wandering from the proper track. Without the dread of falling into errors, he will form his judgment concerning the fortune of particular States, by reckoning and measuring the distances at which they are either more or less removed from any of the views of nature. He will not, like the generality of our Historians, become the dupe to either an appearance of happiness, or the resemblance of misfortune. Not ignorant, like *them*, of that which constitutes the grandeur, the power, or the imbecility of nations, he will scarcely admire their prosperity whilst they are verging to the precipice of ruin.

Now, let us look at Sallust ; who was, most certainly, a Libertine without a spark of principle ; availing himself of all the vices which were countenanced amongst the Romans, in order to give a loose to the luxurious and effeminate indulgence of his own. Yet, this Man, rising, upon the wings of his enlighten-
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ed genius, above himself, mistakes not the pomp, the riches, and the vast extent of the provinces of the Republic for signs and proofs of its prosperity. He perceives that Rome, staggering underneath the burthen of her opulence, is ready to sell herself, and waits only till she can find a purchaser. Rapin reproaches this writer for appearing always dissatisfied with the government, and for inculcating by his reflections on the luxury into which it plunged too prejudicial an opinion of the Republic. To judge from these reproaches, I should presume that this Critic (who remarks, in another place, that we should not venture upon the freedom of revealing *all* truths) can scarcely have proved, notwithstanding his abilities, a better Historian than Strada, Father Orleans, Daniel, and his brother-writers. Let Rapin, then, if he pleases, content himself with facts, and not labour to ascertain their causes. But, for *my* part, I admire that History which instructs me, which extends my reason, which teaches me to judge of what passes under my own eyes, and, by reflecting on the fate of foreign nations, to

foresee the future fortunes of the people who are my compatriots and my contemporaries.

If Livy had not understood this political law of nature, he scarcely would have failed, for the purpose of giving a more interesting turn to his recitals, to make me tremble over his description of the first quarrels between the Patricians and the People. At every instant, should I have imagined that a civil war was on the point of breaking out. Then, is the hour of triumph for the eloquence of an Historian of moderate abilities; and then, should I have sunk insensibly beneath the weight of errors and of prejudices. Revealing to me, on the contrary, that Liberty is the fruit of these dissensions; that Liberty will produce equality; and that, without this equality, a thousand citizens, who were the honor and the ornament of Rome, must all have sunk into the vilest state of slavery, Livy enables me to discover upon what foundations the Roman grandeur has arisen. I acquire, without making any efforts, that enlightened

penetration, that just discernment which is so useful to a citizen. I am drawn unavoidably into a comparison between the different governments; and when the result of this comparison is my firm conviction that liberty and equality not only elevate the mind, but lead us into a fortunate affinity with the views of nature, I *must* conclude that every government which proscribes this liberty and this equality removes us to a distance from their influence: I *must* suppose that *such* a government will only tolerate obscure virtues, and even sink into the absurdity of fettering those talents from the activity of which it needs the most assistance.

Yes, Theodosius! it is your duty to entertain the loftiest ideas of the important office of an Historian. You must absolutely believe that *he ought to exercise a kind of magistracy*. Would you confine him to the humble task of either merely patching one fact upon another, or of relating them in a style but just sufficiently agreeable to gratify curiosity, and cultivate the imagination? This is lowering the

Historian ; it is cutting him down into an insipid Gazetteer, or, at the best, a writer who does no more than give a brilliancy to trifles. But, since the passions have thrown down all the barriers raised up against them by the wisest Legislators ; since they have even imposed laws upon degenerated societies ; or (to speak more properly) since they have governed the world ; it is absolutely requisite that we should discover the wiles, the artifices and (if I may use the expression) the system of politics by which they have invigorated and established their arbitrary power. Should the Historian neglect to investigate and probe this system to the quick, he will give himself over, like the people, by turns, to hopes, to fears, and to absurd and groundless joys. Not having accustomed himself to distrust the promises of the passions, he will become their dupe. He will approve either of laws or of establishments which, probably, may bring on some transitory benefit ; yet not discover that these laws and these establishments are the seeds of an innumerable and lengthened train of future miseries. Thus, his writings, which should in-

inculcate truths, will only serve to multiply and strengthen errors.

THEODOSIUS.

You frighten me with the bare mention of these preliminary studies. The life of man is, surely, too short to bring us to the conclusion of so tedious a pursuit. But, granting that an Historian had acquired all this knowledge, is it not possible that he might find it detrimental? Possessed of such riches, his ostentation would induce him to scatter them, with lavish hands, through all the pages of his work. How could he resist the powerful temptation to set his writings with such precious jewels; such glittering remarks concerning natural and political law? And what would prove the consequence? The recital which should proceed rapidly would linger in its pace. Arguing too often in the language of a philosopher, I should do mischief to myself in the capacity of an Historian. The reader would yawn over each reflection; become tired, and, at length, throw the disgusting

gusting book away. Thus, labouring to make too violent a parade of all my learning, I should intirely lose the opportunity of conveying to any one person a single particle of instruction.

to noblemen and EUGENIUS.

These observations are certainly unanswerable, when grounded upon the idea that your tasteless Historian is either a pedant, eager to throw out his stock of erudition in all its pompous colorings, and fearful lest a single thought should not come forward to display its lustre; or one of those ignorant Philosophers whom we perpetually meet with, and who do not suffer any opportunity to escape them of making tedious remarks on obvious and common truths. But, I allude, Theodosius! to a Thucydides, a Xenophon, a Livy, a Sallust, and a Tacitus: and I ask for such Historians as these, who knew the human heart; were not strangers to the nature of the passions; and possessed too elevated and properly restrained a genius to misapply their powerful and enlightened talents. *My Historian, Theodosius!*

dofius! must be thoroughly capable of composing a treatise on either moral, political, or natural law. But, upon this treatise do I positively forbid him to enter. Let him remain satisfied with giving to an intelligent reader the materials. The present point is not to determine with what sagacity, what temperance and art an Historian ought so to avail himself of his Philosophy as not to fatigue whilst he endeavours to instruct. We shall reach this, if you desire it, in the sequel. Permit me, now, to expatiate still more concerning that preliminary knowledge so indispensibly requisite for an Historian who wishes to become the author of a serviceable work.

To understand this political system of the passions respecting which I have already spoken, we must study their play, their motions, their progress and each of their peculiar characters. We must learn how they unite together; how, mutually, they assist each other; how they intermingle; how, in some measure, they avail themselves of their respective workings; and

and how, at times, they lie concealed, in order to burst forth with a redoubled vigour. In consequence of this study, do we discover that the present is pregnant with the future; and that even the slightest abuses may prove the seeds of the most pernicious disorders. All good minds will become wedded to the opinions of Historians like these whom I have classed under my own description: Historians who will not entertain the most distant idea of intruding themselves upon you with those insipid and dull reflections that betray the man who, looking only at the superficies of things, is astonished at events which must necessarily have come to pass. For instance: what will you say (I take the first stroke that comes to my recollection, although, perhaps, it is not, of all others, the most absurd) what will you say to an Historian who is weak enough to mention, with surprise, *that the Christians gave a loose to vengeance in the moment that their triumph under Constantine ought to have inspired them with the spirit and the love of peace.*

CIDAMON.

O! what an admirable knowledge of the human heart! This is, indeed, fair game for laughter. Then, your Historian, Eugenius! remained a stranger to that which all the world knew. He was ignorant that prosperity extends and multiplies our hopes. Did he expect that the christians, as if without a memory, and without a principle of resentment, would, at once, bury in oblivion the wrongs and the afflictions which they had suffered? This considerate and prudent man would, doubtless, have advised them to have avenged their cause when idolatry was seated on the throne. He would have told them, also, that to render themselves worthy of the toleration which they afterwards enjoyed, they should have feared, they should have enlightened, but not irritated idolatry.

EUGENIUS.

It would prove an endless task to point out all the senseless puerility of this reflection.

But,

But, here follows an instance of his penetration more *wonderful* than the former! The same Historian grants that *the voluptuous court of Leo, the Tenth, was an offence to decency*; yet, almost in the same sentence, he adds that *it must have been apparent that this court polished Europe and rendered mankind more sociable*. This is the first time that I ever heard that society approached towards perfection by *vices*, and not by *virtues*. What astonishes me more with respect to this Historian (the Patriarch of our Philosophers, whom they represent as the greatest genius of our nation) is that, on this occasion, at least, he should not be able (you must forgive the coarseness of the expression) to see beyond his own nose. Was it then so difficult to discover that these voluptuous indecencies under Leo the Tenth brought a stain upon his court, disgraced the character of his clergy, and proved a scandal to christianity? And that, from this scandal arose a general contempt not only for the court of Rome, but even for the Roman Pontiff? Hence, surely, must have proceeded an inducement to examine his doctrines, and to

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compare them with the tenets of preceding times. Revolted minds must have grown heated; and novelty of opinions would have succeeded as a natural and a necessary result. From such sources must have arisen theological disputes, the violence of outrage, schisms, persecutions and parties, of which the avarice and the ambition of the Great must have availed themselves to light up all the flames of civil war: and these, doubtless, were extremely proper to render our forefathers *more sociable*.

Velleius Paterculus was, at the best, only an Historian with a fine imagination. Yet, he is extremely careful not to fall into so gross an error as that committed by Voltaire, when he adverts to the affinity and the connection between the vices and the passions. For a contrary example, let us consult the beginning of the second Book, in Paterculus. He remarks that the first Scipio threw open the most extensive career for the prosperity and grandeur of the Romans; and that the second Scipio paved the way for those vices which were destined

fined to accelerate and to confirm their ruin. Subsequent to the destruction of Carthage, the Republic being no longer restrained by any rival power, it was not by gentle and by slow degrees, but rapidly, that their vices succeeded to their virtues. Pleasures, voluptuousness, and luxuries, the natural and inevitable consequences of fortunate ambition, and the sources of an unbridled avarice, enervated, on a sudden, the courage of the Romans. Viriatus, the captain of a band of robbers, becomes a formidable enemy; and Numantius, who could not arm more than ten thousand citizens, reduces Rome to the necessity of lowering her consequence by the most disgraceful treaties. A Republic of which the yoke hangs so heavily on such a number of extensive countries is no longer in a situation to enforce the laws against seditious citizens who aspire to the power of exercising, in their turns, the violence of tyranny. Be not surpris'd (adds Paternulus) at any of these circumstances. The smallest licence once tolerated will lead to some transgression. Vice which, at the outset, with some timidity, makes trials

trials of its strength, grows bold as it escapes from punishment ; and in the hour of security exalts its head. At length, it will throw off all sense of shame, and act in full defiance of its restraints within a government of which such is the inveteracy of the prevalent corruption that even vice is rendered instrumental to the advancement of the fortune of the citizens.

Forgive me, Theodosius ! if I have tired your patience by enlarging upon the necessity of studying the nature of the passions. But, I am rooted in the idea that nothing is more essential to the historian who wishes to instruct his readers. Nay, it is his duty to acquire this knowledge even if his views should not carry him beyond a wish to please. If he has thoroughly investigated the conduct of the passions, he will at once perceive how they pervert the nature of a government ; and have, in fact, destroyed it, when a people, deceived by false appearances, imagine that they live under the enjoyment of exactly the same laws, the same magistrates and the ancient merit of their forefathers. What
useful

useful elucidations must spring up from his profound reflections, should he draw the picture of these identical passions when, in consequence of their capricious vicissitudes, they, sometimes, work upon a state, and rouse it from its torpid situation ! Then, shall we discover the bold pencil of the Historian, glowing, animated and commanding at every touch ; and then, unless his readers should prove arrant dolts indeed, they, unavoidably, will feel themselves interested even in the fate of nations which are no more. They will compare the circumstances which attended their rise, their progress and their declension with what passes under their own eyes ; because an History, proceeding from the pen of that writer who has a deep and well-collected knowledge of the passions, comes home both to the understanding and the feelings of all ages and of all countries. This is a truth you cannot controvert. And you have never read either Livy, Sallust, or Tacitus, without observing, a thousand times, with pleasure :

De me Fabula narratur.

It

It is ourselves. For my part, I well know that whilst I read, the other day, the History by Thucydides, I thought that I perceived, amidst the just relation of the wild and foolish passions of the Greeks, the portraiture of those which agitate the present states of Europe, and which will cast us into wretched servitude, as they enslaved the Grecian Republics, if, at some future period, another Philip of Macedon should rise against us.

But, if you cannot flatter yourself with the hopes of proving equal to those great Historians whom I have named, at least, you must investigate the nature of the passions with sufficient perspicuity to prevent you from falling into the absurd habits of pressing earnestly upon the Reader an useless heap of puerile remarks; of telling him (for example) that *Europe would have been, at this period, but one immense burial-ground, if Philosophy had not suppressed fanaticism and enthusiasm.* What ignorance of the human heart! not to have discovered that fanaticism wears itself out against those evils of which it is the cause; and that
the

the passions which it exalts, must, after vain efforts, become less active, more feeble, and at length, entirely disappear. We should recollect that nature has given to us passions which are opposed to each other, which enter into contest, and of which we must avail ourselves in order that we may moderate the whole assemblage. Let us distinguish, with Cicero, between the vices of man and the vices of the age: *non vitia hominis sed vitia seculi*. An Historian would have drawn his arguments from the imbecility of the government, and have reproached it with having caused those evils of which the doctrine of Luther and of Calvin was only the pretext and instrument. He would have conceived that Jansenism, all metaphysical as it is, and, of course, but little calculated to affect the multitude, must have lighted up, even in the midst of these fine philosophers and their disciples, the flames of civil war, if the distinguishing characteristics of the present age had been the same passions, the same prejudices and the same manners which were peculiar to our ambitious forefathers.

fathers just issuing from feudal anarchy, under the reigns of Francis the First, and his son.

Strip an Historian of his knowledge of the passions, and the system of his politics will prove, in consequence, as uncertain and as wavering as that of some Statesmen who leave almost the whole to chance, and are, of course, the sport of it. In one chapter, he will become a Machiavelian; and in another he will pronounce eulogiums upon the preservation of good faith. The zealous partizan of luxury, he will deride those governments which have enacted sumptuary laws; whilst, in another page, he will assure you that *the Switzerlanders were strangers to those sciences and arts which spring from luxury; yet they were wise and happy*. The reasonable maxims which sometimes have escaped from him are only proofs that he possesses but a trifling share of understanding. On examination, his work will be found to consist of half-truths, which, rendered either too limited or too extensive, must prove as baneful in their effect as errors. Nothing will appear either in its just proportion

sion or in its true colors. Such (let me cursorily observe to you) is the Universal History written by Voltaire. I might, perhaps, have forgiven him his wretched plan of politics, his false system of morality, his ignorance and that audacity with which he maims, disfigures and alters the greater number of the facts which he professes to investigate. But I could not bear the thought of not finding in the Historian a Poet who, at least, had sense sufficient to prevent his readers from turning away with disgust from the perusal of his compositions, and who could have drawn the passions in those characters which belonged to them. I, certainly, expected to find a writer endued with taste enough to know that the Historian should never sink into buffoonery; that it is an act of shameful barbarism to laugh and turn to pleasantry those errors which affect the happiness of human kind. The remarks of Voltaire, in his character of Historian, are generally little better than rough sketches. Whatever end may be his view, he presses far beyond the mark, and all is overstrained. I am not much surprised at this; because one

of

of his most passionate admirers has informed us that he advised the young students who consulted him to *strike rather with force than justice*. What an admirable rule to please the multitude ! But, the multitude, far from bringing books continually into vogue, can secure to them but a short run ; and, perhaps, Lucian will appear the best counsellor. He recommends it to the Historian to despise the multitude ; not even to write for them ; not to conform himself to the opinions and taste of his contemporaries ; but to look forward to the judgment of posterity, which never is mistaken.

If the province of the Historian stood confined to the relation of the interests, the quarrels, the wars, the constitution, the laws and the revolutions of different States, that knowledge of which I have just spoken would prove sufficient for his purpose. The great object of History is not merely to enlighten the understanding, but to become the guardian of the heart, and to incline it to the love of what is virtuous and beneficial. Whilst men of a
superior

Superior cast of talents draw forth from History the knowledge which is requisite to render them proficient in the art of governing Republics, others may take out of it a series of lessons to instruct them concerning that manner in which they ought to execute the duties of a citizen. I *must* and *will* exact from the Historian the most profound respect for good morals; he *shall* teach me to promote and set the most inestimable value upon the public welfare; to love my country, and pay the most inviolable reverence to justice; he *shall* tear the mask from vice in order that he may teach his readers and the world to honor virtue. The strict principle of probity which I may have derived from an attention to the best Histories will prepare me to push forward the active talents of magistrates who, seated at the head of government, are anxious to advance its happiness. They will dread my censure; and (if I may take the liberty of speaking in so high a style) I shall support them against those violent passions to the influence of which they stand much more exposed than

simple

simple citizens ; and I shall strengthen them in the practice and the course of justice.

You perceive then, Theodosius ! that the most profound study of morality is absolutely requisite to enable the Historian to fulfil this double task demanded at his hands. It is in consequence of this system of morality that the perusal of the ancient Historians (I speak not of all ; for, *Rome has her Cotsins*) becomes so useful and even so interesting. Let us read them over and over ; let us keep them continually within our hands ; and, if we possess a single grain of taste, let us acknowledge that, having for once laughed over the pleasantries of Voltaire, we, thenceforward, must despise them. The majority of our modern Historians have no principle with respect to the order and dignity of the virtues ; and to those disorders whether more or less baneful and extensive which are produced by vices. They have no rule for proceeding through their labors but what they draw either from public prejudices, or from the prejudices of the State to

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which they are devoted. A part will admire the ambition of Charles the Fifth, and the destructive magnificence of Lewis the Fourteenth. Another set will applaud the savage piety of Philip the Second, or William the Conqueror, because *he heard mass, every day, and not only assisted at the canonical hours, but even attended Mattins.* Let us study the nature of the virtues; and trace out those limits which it is impossible for them to pass without degenerating into vices; or, at least, into ridiculous and trifling puerilities.

Rest assured (observed Cicero to Brutus) that, without the succors of philosophy, we shall never rise so high as the attainment of that perfect eloquence for which we seek, and of which we strive to form some adequate idea. It is not, indeed (continues this great writer) that philosophy can supply the orator with all the treasures of which he stands in need; but it will give him those that are indispensibly requisite for his purpose, and under the want of which he would remain condemned to toil through empty lines and barren pages. The
same

same remarks are applicable to history; and, probably, upon a stronger ground, because eloquence too often only dazzles and seduces; and History, of which the leading aim is to instruct and to amend us, cannot, upon any occasion whatsoever, dispense with the knowledge of the virtues which are the most important and essential to the happiness of mankind. Cicero declares that, if not aided by philosophy, we should reason in the dark concerning religion, death, pain and our respective duties. Philosophy is, therefore, requisite for the Historian who is obliged incessantly to place before our eyes these different objects.

The dexterous application of talents would not be necessary to inspire us with the liveliest sensibility to the attractions of virtue, if the Historian, like the poet, had a command over those personages whom he brings forward into action; could give to circumstances that complexion of which he most approved; and was at liberty, according to his inclinations, to reward the good and to inflict a punishment

upon the guilty. But, truth, which it is the great duty of an Historian, on *all* occasions, to consider sacred, compels him to confess that prosperous vice too often triumphs over virtue. Then is it that he should remark that this misfortune becomes the just chastisement merited by the Society who, wandering to a distance from the views of nature, submit to the dominion of the passions. Whilst the Historian paints the transient successes of injustice, of ambition and of avarice, let him trace out the more permanent reverse of fortune which is to follow. Let him inculcate the idea that oppressed virtue will always find a consolation within her own bosom; whilst vice, although prosperous in appearance, is often preyed on by the severity of remorse, and torn, at every moment, by the disquietude and dread which are her constant and inseparable companions. Attending to the propriety of instilling such doctrines, Plutarch is, perhaps, on this account, the first of all Historians. It is impossible to read his Lives without falling more and more in love with virtue. I could wish to become an Aristides,

even

even if I were to experience his fate and suffer banishment. I admire the talents of Themistocles; and the more I pity his unhappy end, the more do I feel myself attached to that virtue of which I know the value... to that virtue which he abandoned.

Is not the life of Augustus a most important lesson of morality? How glorious is the exultation of virtue to perceive that this barbarous Triumvir, steeped in the blood of his fellow-citizens, could neither remove the violence of his apprehensions, nor secure himself from conspiracies, but by affecting virtues which he did not possess, and which, at length, perhaps, he cherished, when he discovered that he stood indebted to them for his repose and safety. How concerned am I, Theodosius! that Tacitus has not painted this interesting picture; Tacitus who renders vice so odious, and virtue so lovely and inestimable in the life of Tiberius! Do you recollect with what natural and glowing colors he represents this master of the world before whom all tremble, and who trembles, likewise,

in the midst of precipices by which he thinks himself surrounded? Tired of himself; tired of Rome, tired of his power, does he fly to Capræa? . . . He feels that it is impossible to fly from himself. In vain does he endeavor to stifle his remorse; and to no purpose does he attempt to set his fears at rest, by plunging into all the infamy of pleasure. He seems to cry out to me, at every instant:

“Discite justitiam, monili.”

“Notwithstanding that I possess both, every occurrence of my private life convinces me that riches and the empire of the whole world are not alone sufficient to confer happiness.”

On this occasion, the remark is unavoidable: If Tiberius had imitated Augustus, he would have enjoyed the same tranquility.

You see that History acquires embellishments from its union with morality, and particularly when it is placed within the skilful hands of Tacitus. I am affected at the death of Helvidius; yet the peace of mind with which he suffers this death, if it does not
make

make me almost envy his fate, at least, exalts the nobler passions of my soul. No good man perishes in consequence of orders from the Emperor, but Tacitus draws from this awful circumstance some useful and important lesson for his readers. And, here, let me intreat you to remark that, in fact, morality associates itself more naturally with History, inasmuch as by the eternal laws of Providence, it is decreed that conscious virtue shall fill the human heart with peace; and that vice shall infest it with misery and dread. The one endears me to my fellow-citizens; but, the other forces them to turn away from me with hatred and with horror. Give me leave to add (and proofs are needless) that the happiness or the calamity of States is subject to the same laws. An unjust line in politics may, perhaps, procure some transient advantage: but, tremble for the reverse; because the sure result of this injustice is the loss of confidence; and from that moment, your enemies will unite in a conspiracy to destroy you. Never will you perceive a nation degrading itself, and rapidly declining, until it shall have given up its morals;

als ; until the power of its laws shall prove enfeebled by its vices.

Such is the moral philosophy which it behoves the Historian to study and to inculcate. Neglecting it, he fails in the execution of one of his most essential duties. Yet, under the pretence of stimulating the mind to virtue, by bringing proofs that Providence will not, at any time, desert it, he never must call up the intervention of a miracle in its favor. On all occasions, Strada employs the Virgin and St. James to secure to the Roman Catholics success against the Innovators. These monkish absurdities exclude the Historian from that confidence with which he ought to inspire his readers ; and from the moment that he daringly pretends to penetrate through the secret mysteries of Providence, he will sink into a childish disposition, and throw disgrace upon the character of divine wisdom. Could we build an opinion upon the ridiculous puerilities of Strada, we should observe that the SUPREME BEING slept, during a length of time ; that Luther and Calvin, making their

their advantage of this slumber, brought forth their doctrines and procured a multitude of followers; and that GOD, awaking, discovered that he stood in need of the armies of Princes, to become the instruments of his vengeance upon the Heretics. It is the height of wickedness and folly to describe the DIVINITY as bearing *his* part in the barbarous acts of injustice committed by Philip the Second, by Grandvelle, and by the Duke D'Alva. Never should such impious absurdities be suffered to disgrace the page of History. Doubtless, it was well worth the while, by a stretch of the imagination, to call together a score of miracles, either to prevent the Roman Catholics from being conquered, or to assist them in the acquisition of some slight advantage; when, at the most important and decisive moment, the Virgin Mary and St. James miss their blow, and permit the winds to destroy that celebrated fleet from the formidable operations of which Strada promised to himself the subjection of the Low Countries, the conquest of England, and, amongst the inhabitants of each of these regions, the establish-

ment of the ancient religion. The marvelous, which is peculiar to an Epic Poem, and which, at once, gratifies our vanity and pleases the imagination, by connecting us with Deities who have passions, becomes disgusting in History which speaks only to our reason. In Homer and Virgil, I read with pleasure that Achilles and Æneas receive from Heaven an armour fabricated by the hands of Vulcan; but I expect the Historian to inform me that a truly great Man and well regulated states have no buckler except their talents and the wisdom of the laws. Let us leave secondary causes to their own line of action; and, without recurring to prodigies for the purpose of either adorning our narration, or of explaining events, the causes of which we cannot trace, let us suffer mankind to pay obedience to those general laws which GOD established at the creation of the world.

CIDAMON.

I approve much of this idea; and in my opinion, every Historian, who daringly brings for-

forward the intervention of the GODHEAD, in our affairs, is as ignorant and as untutored as the people of a preceding age who believed in trials by hot iron, by holy water and by judiciary duels. But, tell me, I beseech you, how will Livy, whom you have described as a perfect Historian, and who, certainly, deals in prodigies as much as Strada, escape your censure?

EUGENIUS.

Without the least difficulty; because, writing the History of a most superstitious, and most ignorant people who imagined that they discovered amidst natural events the predictive signs either of some calamity, or of the wrath of a Divinity whom it was requisite to appease by sacrifices and by religious ceremonies, Livy would have proved wanting in his duty if he had not painted the manner and the religion of the Romans, and if he had passed over in silence the facts that most seriously engaged the prudent vigilance and attention of a Senate which laid the foundation of the
greatest

greatest Empire in the world. I dare venture to assure you that Livy was not addicted to superstition. Had he believed the prodigies to which he has referred, he would have reasoned in a different stile. But, he has not imitated our modern philosophers and turned them into ridicule. This is owing to his not having concluded, as *they* imagined, that superstition was not only the greatest of all evils, but the source of every other calamity. Cæsar, the least superstitious of the Romans, and too much wedded to the doctrines of Epicurus to believe in that kind of providence which was but ill suited to the indolence of the heathen deities, has, notwithstanding mentioned, in his own Commentaries, the prodigies which foretold the victory at Pharsalia. Cæsar *did not* believe them; but his army *did* believe them; and their faith in these preternatural events, redoubling their confidence, contributed to the success of that memorable day. Livy wrote after Cæsar; and who can seriously suppose that he could give credit to such miserable absurdities, at a period when the philosophy of the Greeks was so familiar to

to the Romans, and when the philosophical writings of Cicero, but, more particularly, his treatises concerning *Divination*, and the *Nature of the Gods*, had corrected and enlightened the ideas of all persons who endeavoured to cultivate their understanding.

Thus, Theodosius! Have I, in a great measure, explained to you that kind of knowledge which is a necessary preparative for the proper labors of an Historian.

THEODOSIUS.

I cannot help smiling at the amazing quantity which you have prescribed. Even one half of it is sufficient to convince me that when Cidamon desired me to write History, he became a dangerous adviser. I should, indeed, have yielded to his intreaties, seduced by the opinion of Voltaire who, in some part of his works, has observed, with his usual good sense, that, *to write History requires only labor, judgment and a common understanding.* I am, at length, recovered from my delusion.

But,

But, whilst I hope that Cidamon will henceforward prefer my indolence and my silence to a middling History (to call it by no worse a name) I must continually acknowledge that you have furnished me with a variety of new ideas, from which I reap the highest pleasure and instruction. You have drawn a line of distinction between every different species of historical writing; each requiring different talents, and each subject to different laws. Assure yourself that I will not suffer your investigations and your remarks to remain limited to this point. You *shall* proceed. You have raised my curiosity; and I am sure that Cidamon, who has listened to you with most profound attention, is not less impatient than myself to reap the benefit of your remarks. The weather is fine; and we may lengthen out our walk. When you shall have given us some more lessons, Cidamon will leave the ignorant writers to themselves. For my part, I shall read over and over again the ancient Historians with so much the more pleasure because, *probably*, I may discover faults within their works; and because, *certainly*, I shall trace

trace out those beauties which, from my former want of knowledge, had escaped me.

EUGENIUS.

The value which I set upon *your* friendship and that of Cidamon is, of itself, an indispensable motive for my submission to your commands. But, I shall derive advantages from this proof of my obedience. You both possess so elevated an understanding and so refined a taste, that I *must* feel the highest pleasure from communicating to you my ideas; and let me assure you that I will reform these ideas in the moment of your convincing me that they are grounded upon errors. On the contrary, if they should meet your approbation, I will attach myself to them more strenuously than ever.

Even at the first glance upon the design of Livy, at the commencement of his History, may we form a judgment of that plan which it is the duty of the writer of a general History to pursue. Without sacrificing our attention
(observes

(observes this Author) to the fables with which our ancestors, untutored and superstitious, imagined that they could cast a brighter lustre upon their origin, let us limit our researches to an acquirement of the knowledge of the manners, of the laws whether civil or military, and of those illustrious men who have extended the empire of the Republic over the whole world; let us examine how our prosperity has deluded and conducted us to that fatal point where, sinking underneath the weight of our avarice and ambition, we have lost even the power which is necessary to correct and to amend us.

In my opinion, the plan of Livy embraces all which any conscionable reader is entitled to expect from an Historian. What can he desire more? To neglect a single one of these objects were to deprive History of its interesting force, and, in fact, to cover it with obscurities. If no previous elucidations concerning the nature of public morals, and those laws which form a political constitution are placed before me, in vain do you supply me with

with a state of facts which ought, certainly, to be made known. I cannot unravel their causes; and I must attribute the success by which they were accompanied intirely to the men invested with the chief command. I must believe that chance alone produced them, as, formerly, it produced Hannibal amongst the Carthaginians, and Charlemagne amongst the French; for, both of these personages were prodigies in their nation. Instead of holding up before me a large and finished piece, with a variety of fine resemblances, you shew me (if I may be allowed the expression) a little and contracted portrait. I feel no interest in attending to it; truth flies from my grasp; and I no longer find within the page of History that instruction which I endeavoured to derive from it. If, on the contrary, you make known to me the manners and the government of a Republic, I perceive that the illustrious men who fill the scene are the work of the laws. I attach myself to that Republic which has communicated to them its genius; the passions of my mind grow more and more interested;

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and my reason becomes enlightened, without an effort for the attainment of additional information. Livy, to whom this truth was fully known (a truth of which I cannot mention my discovery without acknowledging the great pleasure that I have received from the perusal of his works) Livy follows with the utmost care all the establishments of the Romans. He never passes by in silence any of those laws which can effect an alteration in the interests and the passions of either the Patricians or the People. I perceive, forming themselves, as it were, under my own eyes, the morals, the habits, the manners, the customs, and the public law of the Republic. I discover the mixture of the virtues and the vices which are at war against each other, but with unequal force. Every citizen, who by the contagion or the purity of his example, either shakes or strengthens the pillars of the Constitution, is brought before me, so that, as far as I am able to reflect upon the facts submitted to my judgment, I see resulting from them the prodigious fortune of the Romans. Some vices (for example, avarice

avarice and ambition) to the destruction of which the laws were not equal, which generally obey the love of glory and of the country, but which, from time to time, rush forward, as in sudden gusts, announce to me what, one day, will prove their empire. I can foretell that they will seize on public power, and oblige freedom to give place to tyranny.

A well-written general History will enable us to discover, from the conduct of a people when they form themselves into a collective body, and from the efforts which they make to reach the object of their views, in what manner they would enjoy their good fortune. Even amidst the representation of this enjoyment, the Historian should enable me to predict the causes of their fall. Then, every thing becomes unravelled of its own accord; facts naturally arise from facts; and this it is which constitutes, in general Histories, the art of preparing the mind for the expected recital of the several events. The narrative, which the Historian is not obliged to interrupt
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by necessary elucidations, runs forward with rapidity, is never languishing, and always draws the reader to its side. But, this is too much, Theodosius ! to expect from the author who has not completed himself, by the studies concerning which I have spoken, for the arduous task of writing History. To succeed, he must have long contemplated the nature of his work ; he must have carefully discussed it through all its parts, and have acquired the power of comprehending the whole at the single glance of an eye.

I am perfectly convinced that no nation presents to us so fine a picture as the Roman Republic ; but, let me beseech you to distinguish between the subject-matter on which the Historian labours, and the dexterity with which he manages and works it to its proper form. The Barbarians who laid the foundation of our modern States were, certainly, as good as the banditti to whom Romulus threw open an asylum. The one witnessed the destruction of their power, before they had an opportunity of giving it solidity and strength ;

strength ; and the others founded several states which still exist ; and, true at least to one principle of their primitive barbarism, imagine, in the midst of pride and imbecility, that they supply the world with a model for the most perfect code of politics. Why are not such Histories interesting to the reader ? Because the writers have constantly neglected to furnish us with even the slightest information concerning the manners, the customs, and the public laws of these barbarians. Thus, am I doomed to follow in the track of an Historian who does not know himself the paths through which he wanders. Fatigue soon overpowers me, in the midst of those battles, those wars and those victories which he enumerates without once insinuating to what these scenes of bloodshed and destruction ultimately lead. If, for instance, he had explained to me the character of the army under Clovis, the spirit of liberty which they brought from Germany, and the submission to slavery which they found amongst the Gauls, it seems probable that I should have traced out, as the result, the whole of what has happened,

pened, and that I should have marked the progress of despotism in the one, and of servitude in the others. I should, indeed, have placed but little value upon the nation the particulars of whose proceedings were brought before me; but I must have admired the wisdom and the dexterity of the Historian. Though not approving, I, doubtless, should have pitied; and even this interesting circumstance would have precluded me from fatigue. My understanding would have become enlightened, and, perhaps, I should not have felt less pleasure from discovering how a people can remain in an eternal infancy than from laying open all the secret springs which assisted in the elevation of the Roman grandeur.

Recollect how Livy, at the commencement of his History, excites the curiosity of the reader, and challenges his attention. *Res Romana quæ ab exiguis profecta initiis, eo creverit, ut jam magnitudinē laboret suâ.* I take a pleasure in considering and measuring that immense interval between Rome, in her infancy, and Rome, the Mistress of the World. On these accounts,

counts, I feel an interest in every little occurrence which is related to me concerning Romulus and his successors. Nothing as yet points out the *primitia*, the first fruits of a great empire; but, fortunately for the Romans, Tarquin renders himself odious and is expelled. The Historian awakens my attention and my curiosity by reminding me that not until the time of Tarquin would liberty prove so established as that the citizens should cease to pervert it to an improper use. These expressions prepare me for the grandeur and the fall of the Republic. These are the great objects of my investigation. I read with eager pleasure the recital of the first wars of the Romans against the Æqui, the Volsci, the Tuscans, and the Samnites; and of the perpetual dissensions between the Patricians and the Plebeians. Why? Because I perceive a people who, amidst their enterprizes and their skirmishes, apparently but of slight importance, acquire great virtues and great talents, prepare themselves for more elevated achievements, and approach, however slowly, that point to which their manners, or rather their form

form of government, invite them. When you observe the immense materials of a vast edifice collected all together, you will consider them with pleasure, because your imagination will anticipate what is to follow; will call up the perspective view of that magnificent palace for the elevation of which the great architects are preparing. All this is applicable to the Roman History, by Livy; and whensoever, Theodosius! you meet with readers who pretend that his first Decad is inferior to the rest, conclude that they are actually incapable of *properly* perusing Histories: and that they cannot see in the event before them the nature of that which is to follow.

This unity of action and of interest so strongly recommended to the Epic Poet, if he means that we should actually become a kind of parties concerned in all the enterprizes of his Hero, is not less necessary for the Historian: for, it is founded even upon the nature of the human mind which cannot employ itself on several objects at the same time, but must divide its attention, and consequently,

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feel a less animated impression, grow tired, perplexed, disgusted, and, at length, derive no benefit whatsoever from its application. Homer makes me interested in the return of Ulysses to Ithaca; and Virgil inspires me with an earnest anxiety for the establishment of Æneas in Italy. They never forget that this is the great end of their Poem and, in order to rivet my attention they frequently recur to it. So, the Historian should never suffer me to lose sight of that point to which he has promised to conduct me. Then History becomes a kind of Epic Poem. It proceeds to its great mark through those impediments which are opposed against it by passions and the events of fortune. The Gauls in burning Rome, and Pyrrhus and Hannibal in Italy supply the place of the marvellous in Homer and in Virgil, and affect me not less for the fate of the Romans than Juno and Neptune affect me for the fate of Æneas and Ulysses.

Next to Livy, let me mention Grotius. His History of the wars which gave birth to the Republic of the United Provinces is a work deserving of the highest praise. I do

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not mean to say either that it is filled with maxims which can supply us with materials for a *proper* code of politics, or that the pages are replete with bold and masterly representations of the passions. It is not under this point of view that I mean particularly to consider Grotius. But, recollect with what care and precision he makes known to us the manners and the genius of a people who can put up with a *Master*, but will not bear a *Tyrant*; who attempt to throw off the yoke, and who preserve, from habit, the prejudices which they imbibed in consequence of their ancient forms of government. You perceive them distrustful of themselves, doubting, hesitating, inclining to the impulse of their resentment, yet, cautiously trying the strength of their ground, and, notwithstanding that they have lost the character and distinguishing features of men living under a monarchical dominion, still destitute of any of those leading marks which point out to us the resemblance of Republicans. The more strikingly to paint this uncertain situation, Grotius has thrown the first books of his work into the
form

form of annals : and, as he describes events according to the order of their dates, I perceive that successes and miscarriages maintain, by turns, an equal weight within the balance ; and, of course, my mind fluctuates between the varying passions of hope or fear. Whilst I admire the prudence of William, Prince of Orange, I, sometimes, feel an inclination to accelerate the exertions of his courage ; yet, soon afterwards, I reproach myself for this impatience ; and, thus agitated, I acquire more discernment, and learn how difficult it is to establish liberty upon the wreck of monarchy. Although William laid the foundation of the Republic, his son Maurice is to raise the edifice ; and here Grotius imparts a new form to his work, and, conducting me, at a quicker pace, towards the point within his view, enables me to discover all the secret springs of government. Perusing Livy, I enter into the nature of the whole History of the Romans. No impediments delay my progress. Having made my reflections upon the first Decad, the whole matter becomes unravelled, and each event is brought before me.

I see that the Romans, masters of Italy, will stand exposed to wars more dangerous; but the past supplies me with information concerning the future; and I expect to find, even during periods of the most deep calamity, a Fabius, a Marcellus, and a Scipio. And thus, though Grotius concludes his History with the celebrated truce of 1609, I appear to have discovered in it the seeds of those occurrences which started up afterwards in the United Provinces, and of those passions to which they owed their life and their activity. I am not astonished at either the ambition of the Republic, or that propensity to war which gave rise to perpetual intrusions and attempts to intermeddle with all the state affairs of other powers; yet, even through the violence of hostilities, do I perceive that mercantile spirit which must increase in the very midst of the expence and the disgrace inseparable from war; a spirit which will, at length, prevail, and induce the Republic to consider peace, next to commerce, as the sovereign good.

Shall I confess to you that I think Grotius, in the general disposition of his work, exceedingly

ceedingly superior to Tacitus? It might be said that this last Historian took up the pen without having maturely weighed the whole extent and scope of those objects which he had in contemplation. No picture can be finer than that which he has given us of the reign of Tiberius; and, therefore, does Racine with justice call him the greatest painter of antiquity. And yet, I feel that something more is wanting; yet, I desire a greater fund of information from his writings. When I open his annals, I am not prepared for the dark politics of a tyrant who, though he never thinks himself sufficiently powerful, is yet fearful lest the power which he possesses should seem too great. I perceive the formation of the most intolerable despotism; and yet I do not know in what it possibly can end. I become fatigued over the relation of almost uniform acts of cruelty and injustice; and I cannot see that it is requisite to multiply these details, in order to convey to me a just idea of Tiberius, of his Court, of the shameful patience of the Senate, and of the abject temper of the People.

Perhaps, Theodosius ! you will find fault with my temerity ; yet, you *must* allow that if Tacitus, instead of exclusively calling our attention to the reigns of Tiberius, of Claudius, of Nero and of some other Princes, had written the History of the *Empire*, and not of the *Emperors*, his readers would have felt themselves more interested in the nature of his work, which must, in this case, have proved a source of information and instruction to every age and every country. Our ancestors (might Tacitus have observed at the commencement of his work) conquered the world, because they revered virtue and liberty. The spoils of their enethies having corrupted them, they were no longer worthy of remaining in a state of freedom. Dissentions have enslaved us by transferring the public power into the hands of some covetous and ambitious citizens. Marius and Scylla prepared the way for the power of Julius Cæsar, who usurped the sovereign authority, and was punished for his presumption ; but, Brutus and Cassius were destined to prove the last of the Romans. A new order of things arises.

Softened

Softened and corrupted by the vices of slavery, we become habituated to the chains of it; and the Barbarians, who will learn to despise us, shall not only destroy us, but even eradicate our very name.

Either I am much mistaken, or this exposition would have been more calculated than that of Tacitus to excite the curiosity of his readers, and make them feel an interest in the progress of his work. Then, instead of confining my attention to some Princes, from whose cruelty and imbecility the mind recoils with horror and disgust, should I contemplate the fate of the Roman People. Thus (should I have remarked) is the posterity of these men who, astonished the world, at first, by their virtues, and, at length, by their talents, condemned to fall a prey to the bandittis of Barbarians. What secret poison can have benumbed the faculties of this formidable power? If Tacitus had intended to describe the progress of the monarchy, as the preceding Historians have traced the progress of liberty, he, certainly, would have opened his work

with the commencement of monarchy, and not with the reign of Tiberius. Instead of reserving the History of Augustus for the employment of the last years of his life, he would, at first, have offered to our perusal the annals of the reign of this prince.

What would I not give for a work, by Tacitus, executed upon this plan? With what interested feelings, with what avidity should I read the life of one of the most accomplished and cunning tyrants, written by the Historian who best knew the wiles and stratagems of the human heart, and whose unerring eye saw every passion underneath the mask which covered it! I should have shuddered for the situation of the State whilst I observed that those citizens were doomed to death whose virtues gave umbrage to an usurper, who only abstained from cruelty when he ceased from fearing. How amply should I have been instructed if Tacitus had thrown open to me the secret springs of that ambition which had the art to hide itself in order to confirm and to secure its power and

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influence, and which called in all those abject passions that were designed to spread degeneracy amongst the Romans and sink them into ignominious patience. But, this remark does not go far enough. The ambition of which I speak attained to points of greater consequence; and was conducted with such singular address as to have been beloved and even much regretted. The falling Romans wound up their adulation by declaring that this Octavius (who, certainly, did not deserve the gift of life) ought never to have died. After having painted Augustus in that masterly stile and with those animated colors which it is impossible to admire too much, Tacitus would even have gone beyond himself in the life of Tiberius. He would have laid open not only those vices which naturally resulted from the passions of this Prince, but those which joined them, and were, in fact, the offspring of particular occurrences. Augustus concealed his sentiments, and was unwilling that any person should guess their nature. Tiberius required that *his* mind should be discovered through the veil with which he strove to hide it.

Hence, that dark and sullen tyranny from which the timid Romans had not the power of escaping. I should read with avidity all those details of false accusations and of punishments, which Tacitus sometimes excuses himself from enlarging upon, for fear of fatiguing his readers, because they would enable me to put together this chain which connects all the events ; and to comprehend how the Romans, who yet talked of their Republic, under *absolute* Emperors, were to sink into such an excess of baseness and corruption as even to regret the death of Nero. Give me leave to say one thing more ; and, indeed, I tremble when I make the observation. It is that Tacitus, adopting the plan which I propose, would have assisted me to think, would have enlightened my comprehension, and would himself have gained a clearer view, together with a more decisive knowledge of the situation of the fortune of the Roman Empire.

CIDAMON.

I must confess that you have surprised me. I feel myself not a little at a loss to understand you. Let me intreat you to explain yourself. Is it possible that you can seriously contend (for, you have already given us a glimpse of this design) that Tacitus imagined that the Romans were not taking steps which led inevitably to their own ruin, when they implicitly obeyed their Emperors?

EUGENIUS.

Yes! such are, indeed, my sentiments. And let me, coolly, ask you for what reason I should relinquish them? For, although Tacitus remarks, in his *Germania*, that the Empire became unable any longer to resist the power of its enemies, *urgentibus imperii fatis, nihil jam præstare fortuna majus potest quam hostium discordiam*, I am convinced that this truth escaped from him either by accident, or by whim, and was not a consequence of his
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political tenets; because, in the second book of his annals, and under the reign of Tiberius, he observes that Arminius attacked the Roman power at the period when it was the most flourishing. I well recollect his expressions : *liberator haud dubie Germaniæ, et qui non primordia Populi Romani, sicut alii reges ducesque, sed florentissimum imperium lacefferit.* You may discover from these expressions that he, at this æra, considered the prosperity of Rome as more firmly established than when the Samnites, Pyrrhus, and Hannibal endeavoured to overthrow it.

In his Eulogium on Agricola, he applauds Nerva for having conciliated the power of the Prince, and the liberty of the People; and he calls them *res olim dissociabiles*. Then, he thought that, subsequent to the reign of Nerva, they might be brought into association. He adds that Trajan established the public security. These are no longer simple hopes. *Nec spem modo ac votum securitas publica, sed ipsius voti fiduciam, ac robur assumpserit.* Tacitus, who, certainly, was not a flatterer, seals

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his imagination upon agreeable chimeras ; and it appears to me that if he had opened his work with the reign of Augustus, and exercised his usual depth of judgment upon the investigation and description of that system of politics which deluded the Romans, and habituated them to slavery, he would have delivered it as his opinion that Tiberius might have spared himself those artifices, that perfidy, and those cruelties which he thought necessary to his own preservation ; and that, the Romans having once experienced the danger of possessing virtues and talents, the Empire would have fallen into an extreme degree of imbecility. The way to have removed all fears whatever of a resistance from the citizens was to manage, and keep upon the best terms with, the soldiers, and by corrupting them to make sure of their obedience. After the death of Nero, the armies disposed of the Empire, because the State was totally become destitute of any public power. Examining the occurrences during the reign of Augustus, Tacitus would have discovered that under the shelter (or rather the image) of
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this power, this Prince found his security; and that, from the moment of the disappearance of the phantom, he had nothing to expect but the most deplorable calamities.

But, *something too much of this*; for, I always bear in mind the sage precept of Quintilian; and it is not without much hesitation that I venture to cast the least blame upon so excellent an Historian as Tacitus. Notwithstanding that, in the course of my reflections, I have already dwelt upon this particular, let me again urge the absolute necessity of clearly marking out, at the beginning of a general History, that ultimate point to which it is intended to conduct the reader, and of entering into every detail which can discover to him how all the facts are intermingled, and united to each other; and how the last revolutions are the work of the first.

A single example will elucidate my idea; and, for this purpose, I shall fix upon the History of the Revolutions of Rome by Abbé de Vertot. I consider him as the most equal,
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amongst all our Authors, to the task of writing History. His mind is elevated and noble. The vivacity of his imagination does not get the better of his understanding; but only assists him to decorate the subjects of which he treats with proper ornaments. His pictures are painted with a bold and glowing hand; and his reflections are concise. He understands the nature of the human heart, and of the progress of the passions; and his recitals move forward at a rapid pace. These, certainly, are the distinguishing characteristics of the happiest talents. Yet, whether he was seduced by the facility and the graces of his genius, and, therefore, had neglected to enter upon the preliminary explanations concerning which I have already spoken, or whether he thought it quite sufficient if he pleased those readers with which Paris is so plentifully stocked, and who conclude themselves enough instructed when they receive amusement, he formed a design of giving us a Roman History detached from the details of Livy. All our *learned* women, and that innumerable multitude of men who are but women, perused his work

work with great avidity, and, quoting, most improperly, those names and facts with which their memories were laden, of course, became a torment to sensible and well-enlightened companies. When reading the Roman Revolutions by Abbé Vertot, I have frequently found myself obliged to supply from recollection those incidents which he has passed over intirely in silence. If I had not previously acquired a competent knowledge of the affairs of the Romans, it would have been impossible for me to have attained to it solely by the assistance of this work; as that History is naturally obscure to every rational reader which does not unravel the general causes of events, and describe the intimate connection that subsists between them.

But, whilst I observe to you, Theodosius! that even the slightest details please, instruct and interest, provided that they touch upon the manners, the laws, and government of a nation, I do not mean to have them scattered throughout the work with too prodigal a hand.

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These details must be necessary; the Historian who wishes to instruct and please

(Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci)

must chuse from amongst them those which are the most likely to render truths forcible, affecting, and agreeable. You must not fatigue the reader with either an abundance of erudition, or an immense collection of uniform occurrences. *The full mind will instantly throw them up.* It must be confessed that Abbé Fleury has sometimes failed in paying a necessary and sufficient attention to this precept of our masters. In his Ecclesiastical History he fatigues those readers who have less piety than taste and penetration by the repetition of his details. They are piled up without judgment into an immense heap; and, certainly, are not of use to prove how much Religion ought to triumph over the politics of Princes, the pride and vanity of Philosophers, and the jealousy of the Priests of the false Gods. But, perhaps, I am mistaken; perhaps, Ecclesiastical Historians should be subject to regulations different from those which ought

ought to bind the writers of Profane History. I am inclined to be of this opinion, because Abbé Fleury has imposed it upon himself as a law to relate facts, as a mere evidence, without venturing either to pass a judgment in the case, or to meet them with the least reflection. But, let us not forget that this Writer is one of those men of genius who has conferred the most literary honor upon our nation. We stand indebted to him for such discourses concerning Ecclesiastical History as it is impossible to read without commending and admiring; discourses which prove the integrity, the wisdom and the discernment which are the life and soul of an Historian.

Were they to propose following the same plan, the same design and the same views which were adopted by Livy, I should imagine that the modern Historians, granting that they possessed a genius and an understanding adequate to the task of writing History, might have drawn an instructive, interesting and agreeable picture of their respective nations. The manners of France, England,

land, Spain, Italy, Germany and other countries were extremely barbarous ; and, during several ages, either the laws or the customs of which these manners were the groundwork kept alive in their inhabitants, whom I dare not venture to call either citizens or magistrates, a rough, unpolished temper ; an ignorance ; yet, at the same time, a force and energy which have impowered them to execute most extraordinary acts ; acts precious in the opinion of those inquirers who wish to ascertain the heights to which the human mind is capable of rising. From one revolution to another, these people were conducted to that politeness on which we pride ourselves, during the present times ; a politeness that is, at bottom, but a different kind of barbarism, because proceeding from the effeminacy of our manners, from low and abject views, and not from such a wise system of laws as may have brought us nearer to the views of nature. It would be requisite to paint that tumult of the passions which, always ill at ease, continually clash ; and that fortune in the midst of this chaos which decides upon the

the interests of Kings, of the Great and of the People; and of which the fate of Nations is so frequently the sport. How interesting must such a picture have appeared, if finished by the genius, the knowledge, the understanding and the discernment of Livy! This great Historian avails himself not less of the errors of mankind than of their wisest actions; and the reader, instructed concerning that which it is his duty to avoid, learns, also, at the same time, what it behoves him to pursue.

In the History written by Father Daniel, you must discover that he did not even give himself the trouble of a single moment for consideration whether *this* or *that* plan ought to have been chosen as the object of his pursuit. Instead of studying the ancient times, he found it more convenient to build the whole of his hypothesis upon the modern times. Perceiving a monarchy wheresoever he alights upon the name of King, he constantly passes over in silence those customs and manners, either more or less unpolished, which were the sole basis of the public law of the nation.

nation. He leads the reader from the time of Clovis to the present period, without giving him an opportunity to form the least suspicion of those revolutions which our compatriots have experienced, and which, at one epoch, stole on by slow and imperceptible degrees, and, at another, rushed forward with more violence, tumult and contention. Mezerai, although not, like Father Daniel, a flatterer, was more deficient than him in that particular branch of knowledge which is necessary for the conveyance of instruction. His system of morality is more worthy to fill the page of History than that of Daniel. But, his style, though less languishing, is hard. His pictures are coarsely daubed, and want the proper coloring to engage and please the reader. Abbé Vely is represented as having designed to take a different road ; to give an account of our laws and to describe our manners ; but, ignorant of the subjects, he has thrown all into inextricable confusion. To the first race he ascribes customs which are confined evidently to the third. His History is a chaos where all is jumbled together without

out distinction, and mixed up without a single grain of either regularity or critical investigation. In a word, I discover a dependent Historian, in the pay of a Bookseller; a writer whose sole riches are (if I may venture on the expression) an abundant sterility. The continuators of his work have, doubtless, followed a different method, and I am told that the Public read their labours with a degree of pleasure.

I am at a loss to tell whether the foreign Histories have been treated more successfully than our own. Of Mariana I know nothing; and, therefore, I should act ridiculously were I to attempt to criticise his work. Nevertheless, I could venture to lay a wager that a Spanish Jesuit must unavoidably have written a very poor History of Spain. An unprincipled ecclesiastic is versed only in intrigues; and he who never wanders from the rigid pale of orthodoxy *must* continue ignorant of those political truths which he despises. A Canon of Saint Genevieve, whose name I have forgotten, has given us a History of the Empire.

pire. Having read a few pages, I thought it sufficient to run loosely over the remaining passages of the work ; but, even of this disgusting task I soon became fatigued. Rapin has, indeed, studied the English and their Constitution with more care and accuracy than the other Historians. His views are upright ; he loves justice ; and his system of politics is built upon the ground of the principles of natural law ; but the progress of his narrations is slow and tiresome ; and, unfortunately, he interweaves his work with all of those materials which he has had the trouble to collect together. He is, indeed, learned ; but, he wants taste. The descriptions in Hume run on more rapidly ; yet, not knowing his nation, he is, of course, unable to mark out and ascertain the influence of the national character as blended with the events which he relates. His own reflections are common ; and result too frequently from those false politics of which morality must disapprove. Having begun his History at the end, and without examining and unravelling the chain which connects together all the ages and all the occurrences

currences of a nation, it is not astonishing that his History of the Stuarts should prove deficient in a multitude of desirable particulars. Afterwards, he carried his work up to the ancient Britons; and, here, we discover only an Historian whose reading is confined to Chronicles. Of the law of the Normans, he, certainly, was ignorant; and all his remarks concerning the polity of the Fiefs are unintelligible; or, at least, I could not understand them. Father Orleans pretended to write a History of the Revolutions of England. Instead, therefore, of limiting his researches to the wars in which the several Princes engaged, he should have described the government of the Britons, the Anglo-Saxons, the Danes and the Normans, because, from these different Constitutions, as from their salient point, issued the different interests, the quarrels, the troubles and the revolutions which have agitated England. Oh! what a pleasant Historian is this Father Orleans! Not a syllable of information will he condescend to give us with respect to *Magna Charta*, because he thinks it fully sufficient to have called it the Rock upon which
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the regal authority was dashed to pieces, and the source of those commotions which afterwards prevailed in England. It must, however, be confessed that Father Orleans intended to confine his labors to those changes which Religion had experienced subsequent to the reign of the eighth Henry. Why, therefore, did he not give his work a title more suitable to its nature? Having reached this epoch, he appears much more the master of his subject; he proceeds with a more firm and rapid step; and we might actually conclude him worthy to have written History, but that his prejudices would not suffer him always to perceive and to divulge the truth.

The History of Scotland, by Buchanan, should not be confounded with those works concerning which I have just spoken. In him, we trace a writer of a superior genius, formed upon the principles and the richly crouded school of great Historians. His narratives are full of life and animation; and he appreciates with just discernment the virtues and the vices. His reflections, always short, include a fund

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of pointed sense and strong meaning, which actually invite the reader to meditate upon the subjects to which they were directed. He has painted the manners and the passions with a considerable degree of force and truth. His History is concise; because, regarding it as written for the instruction of posterity, he thought it unbecoming to load it with those trifles which amuse our curiosity in memoirs that sink, after a lapse of time, into oblivion, and only wait for their extinction until the appearance, amidst a succeeding generation, of new memorials pregnant with the same idle absurdities, under different appellations.

I could have wished that Buchanan had attended not less than the ancient Historians to the description of the government and of the public law of the nation. Not that he has totally omitted to intersperse within his work several remarks replete with valuable instruction relative to these subjects; but, they are separated at too great a distance from each other to produce the effect which I so much desire; an effect gained by a more modern writer

writer (the celebrated *Robertson*) who, with a requisite propriety, has collected together into one mass all the particulars immediately connected with the feudal constitution of the Scots. An Historian cannot place too slight a dependence upon either the inclinations or the efforts of his readers to rise above their generally natural negligence and idleness. It is necessary to dart upon them with powerful and lengthened beams of light which may irradiate their wandering minds, enable them to look up to the causes of events, and to observe with ease, or rather with pleasure the several chains which link them to each other; and this, perhaps, is the most uncommon and the most difficult art which it is possible for an Historian to possess.

But, indeed, Theodosius! I would not advise any writer to undertake a general History. The greater part of the States of Europe have reason to dread the truth. They want flatterers; not Historians. An History which, ascending to the origin of their customs, their manners, their laws, their rights and their

pretensions, should mark out the progress of either their advancing or their declining fortunes, would shock their vanity and self-love, and be, perhaps, considered as the work of some unnatural and invidious citizen. But, independently of this first obstacle, do but observe to what impure sources our Historians are under the necessity of repairing in the search of truth. I am aware that Livy sometimes complains of the earliest historical monuments of the Romans where the same facts are related in a different manner; but, this incertitude stands confined to particular events of which the different circumstances cannot occasion any mistake relatively to the nature of the government, the laws, the manners and the character of a Republic, the citizens of which are equally informed as to these points, and live within the walls of the same place. It is not so with modern States: but, to bring the matter more home to ourselves, let us recollect how Gaul held within her bosom different nations all of whom had different customs, laws and prejudices, yet languished under the same and equal ignorance. Cast
your

your eyes upon our Gregory de Tours, and the Chroniclers still more untutored and barbarous who succeeded him. Not a single one of these Historians understood the nature of the government of the State in which he lived. To discover, therefore, undecided truths; truths always upon the point of escaping from our researches, we must throw ourselves upon the study of our diplomatic codes, of our ancient formularies, of our capitularies; we must groan under the burthen of this paltry heap of nonsense; we must incumber ourselves with documents containing stuff from the investigation of which the most inflexible and trammelled book-worm would turn away with dread and horror.

Having once dried up the understanding in these disgustful and barren studies, how is it possible to avoid writing History in a stile of all others the most barbarous? I grant that thus we may have acquired that kind of knowledge which will enable us to describe the manners, the public law and the character of a nation; but, by what means shall we pre-

serve that taste and that eloquence by which the reader is attracted and delighted? Voltaire, in some part of his works, boasts of having perused our Capitularies. But, every man is not endued with the happy art of extracting from these Capitularies as much gaiety as will render him the most frivolous and the most pleasant of all Historians whatsoever! I am afraid that every writer inclined to present the public with a general History in a rational form must consume the most valuable years of his life in clearing up the historical chaos of a nation. Nothing would then remain to support him throughout so arduous a labor, except a languishing old age; an imagination almost extinguished, or at least incapable of intermingling such a necessary fire with reason as would light up a warm, elegant, powerful and spirited description of events and of those men whose actions are to be submitted to the attention and judgment of the reader.

Relating either the disgraces or the successes of a nation, let the Historian, at once impartial and explicit, tell us how they have conducted

ducted themselves in the hour of their good fortune, and in what manner they have borne the pressure of calamity. It is in this picture, when painted by a correct and faithful hand, that I shall discover the chain of events which prove alternately the causes and the effects of each other; and which, also, succeed each other without preserving the same character. Then, History has no occasion to borrow the supercilious and strange language of Philosophy to instruct me concerning the power of circumstances over our minds, our manners, and our laws; and then I shall trace out in the caprices of fortune the source of the caprices in our conduct.

Should an Historian, in order to appear interesting, exaggerate the misfortunes of any particular situation, or unseasonably represent a State as tottering upon the brink of ruin, he might, indeed, secure the attention of inexperienced readers; but every man of understanding will smile at the simplicity of the author and throw the book aside. He is sensible that a nation does not experience real and

important losses, but when it loses the character to which it stood indebted for its successes.

This fault which I reprove is rare ; but that of Historians who suffer themselves to be dazzled by the fallacious appearances of prosperity is more frequently committed. So agreeable are self-love and flattery ; so pleasing is the belief that we are indebted for the smiles of fortune solely to ourselves, that a nation would prove less attentive to their own conduct in proportion as prosperity exaggerates in their own opinion the extent and amplitude of their strength ; and as their power increases their hopes and diminishes their fears. This is the rock so fatal to nearly all Historians who, like the People, are the dupes of that state which prepares and which announces a declension. Not discovering immediately, at the dawn of this revolution, any symptom except a virtue more gentle and more easy, they want the confidence to foresee, like Cato, that the passions, freer from restraint, must soon introduce a secret anarchy throughout the government,

vernment, force the laws to relax into a milder habit of indulgence, and, at length, proceed to the most dangerous excesses. I could wish, with all my heart, that it were possible for me to erase the first lines of the thirty-fourth book of Livy. Until he comes to this part, the most severe critic cannot reproach him with the commission of any error; and I am the more astonished to perceive that he considers as a trifle the debate which arose upon the subject of the *Oppian* law, because he puts into the mouth of Cato a discourse worthy of his gravity, of his quick foresight and of his profound wisdom, whilst the Tribune Valerius pleads, but with the weakest arguments, in favor of the luxury of the women. We learn, from Horace and Cicero, that Homer and Demosthenes have sometimes slept. Then, let us pardon Livy for this absence of the mind. From these reflections, Theodosius will discover that I want a general History which, to the relation of the enterprizes and the successes of a State against its enemies, adds an equally authentic and particular description of its domestic vices, and that de-

clension of morals which is the signal and the fore-runner of its ruin.

It only remains that I should trouble you with a few words concerning the manner in which I think that general Histories ought to be written when a People has reached that point of depravation to which all remedies are inadequate. We may observe that the fall of every State is not the same. Some burst asunder with violent convulsions. The destruction of others is preceded either by a torpid lethargy, or by a species of delirium still more dangerous and alarming. It is the duty of an Historian to paint the striking, the correct and the full-length picture of a nation, which, having once passed a state of freedom, and next experienced that its forms of government were tottering, for a length of time, upon their basis, at last, sinks into inevitable ruin. It is, indeed, true that the manners, the morals, the laws and the magistrates of this Republic have lost their influence and power; but the remembrance of each exists. The citizens who suffer by this anarchy demand their rights;

rights; whilst those who reap from it an advantage endeavour to establish and to confirm their tyranny. The injustice of these operates like a contagion, and renders the others equally unjust. Only the common virtues remain; yet, great talents still exist; and, therefore, History may prove at once interesting and instructive.

That I may throw my ideas into a clearer point of view, permit me to call up to your recollection the History of the Peloponesian war, written by Thucidydes. This Author, whom all antiquity admired, produced a Master-piece when he presented us with the History of the fall of Greece. Her Republics, intoxicated with the glory which they had acquired by repelling Xerxes, became insensible of the necessity that they should remain united. Thucidydes paints the Greeks as actually upon the point of forgetting the laws of their confederation. The pride of Athens offends and shocks the pride of Lacedæmon, and all Greece, which becomes divided, is inclined to support and to advance the ambition
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of these two cities with as much constancy and courage as they had manifested when engaged in the defence and service of their country. Equal virtues and equal talents afford the earnest of an interesting spectacle; yet, I, at length, perceive that these Republics exhausted themselves by forming enterprizes above their strength; and must shortly tire under the exertions of that valor and perseverance which run counter to their new propensities, their inclinations and their taste. From this situation of Athens and of Lacedæmon must arise the anarchy of Greece; and from this anarchy the grandeur and the power of Macedon; and no circumstances (as you may plainly see) could prove more interesting and instructive to a reader who does not look with criminal indifference upon either the happiness or the misfortune of Societies.

Give me leave to furnish you with another example from the Roman Republic, in which, when its riches, the fruits of conquests, had destroyed the equal balance of Magistracies and the authority of the Laws, no public power

power existed; because, *Scipio Nasica*, so applauded by the ancients, had no other means of engaging in opposition against the projects of *Tiberius Gracchus* than by attacking him in arms, and in the face of all the citizens. The magnanimous resolution of *Nasica* and the blood of a Tribune whose person was sacred laid the foundation of that long series of wars, of crimes and of calamities of which they were themselves continually productive. This picture is neither less instructive nor less interesting than that of the most splendid and unfulfilled epochs in the Roman History. Here, I know (if I may take the liberty of using the expression) all the extremes of human nature during a state of either good or evil. Whilst the Romans terrify me by their vices, they yet raise in a more considerable degree my admiration of their talents. If the Historian has executed his duty; if he has not failed to point out to me the chain which binds together these events, I must be either the most stupid of all readers, or I must call up to my recollection the detail of those occurrences which I have perused, and conclude, after a full

full and accurate comparison of the whole, that *no system of politics can lead to public happiness, but inasmuch as it derives and draws its principles from morality.*

Yet, it is quite different with that kind of national declension of which the symptoms are imbecility, cowardice and baseness. But, let the Historian keep up his own dignity, and leave times which are so wretched and contemptible to die away from his remembrance. If, however, amidst the annals of this slavish nation, you should find a Prince too good and brave to bend at once beneath the load of his misfortunes; a Prince whose wisdom and whose talents could, for a while, retard the ruin of his Empire, employ your pen: it is the homage which you owe to virtue. If either a monster, or some weak and wretched fool of a peculiar cast hastens and precipitates, by his vices or by his absurdities, the fatal crisis of his nation, then, draw him from his obscurity for the sake of bringing him to punishment, and in order to teach other Princes, who cannot soar to *any* virtue, that they should, at least,

least, rest quiet amidst the obscurity and the meanness of their vices.

In my opinion, Herodian, one of the most judicious Historians of antiquity, appears to have adopted the rule which is the subject of our remarks. You must recollect that he has chosen that celebrated epoch when the misfortunes of the Empire, kept back by some good Princes, from Trajan down to Commodus, resumed their course with all the violence of a torrent of which the waters, in vain repressed, break loose and overflow the banks intended to confine them. You will perceive Commodus embarrassed by the reputation of his Father. You would even believe that this unprincipled miscreant is struggling to escape from his own wickedness ; but, soon, encouraged by the vices of his nation, this abominable monster must become regretted, like Nero, of whom he will have proved too much the imitator. Then it is that the military democracy which might have been foreseen, even in the time of Tiberius, arises to its full excess ; for, the Legions begin to con-
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clude that, as *they* constitute the power of the Empire, *that* Empire is their property. The Prætorian Cohorts, at length, familiarise themselves to these ambitious thoughts, and put the Empire up at auction. Stimulated by *their* example, every army is determined to choose (and does, in fact, appoint) an Emperor, who (we may truly say) is only suffered to be their Chief Magistrate. With what a happy brevity does Herodian relate those facts on which our modern Historians would have lavished whole volumes without conveying to their readers one particle of instruction ! Amidst civil wars, I perceive some traces of the ancient ideas, and the seeds of those revolutions which are to follow the present dissensions. Severus, who dreads Albinus, advances him to the Empire that he may gain time and opportunity, *first*, to take away the life of Niger, and, *next*, to turn upon Albinus and destroy *him*. It is soon afterwards imagined that the most effectual means of securing the personal safety of the *Emperors* are to divide the Empire ; and, therefore, Antoninus reigns with Geta. Macrinus, their successor, raised his son to the dignity of Cæsar,

that

that he might make sure of the two armies. All this is calculated to instruct me. I perceive that no art is in the policy of the passions, except the art of conforming to circumstances, and of acting in obedience to their influence. I feel my obligations to Herodian for having prepared me to expect that Revolution which must, at length, bring forward a rival against Rome, and convert the Empire into two separate and independent powers.

A writer undertaking the History of the reign of Constantine, and fortunately endued with the fine genius of Herodian, would not have failed to inform his reader what kind of new vices he might expect to see starting into action when the Legions should have lost their courage with their seditious spirit, and the Emperors, accustomed to more quiet within their Courts, might sleep in safety upon the throne. At this æra, we should discover but few Princes whose actions deserved to be transmitted to posterity; and the Historian must confine his labors to the exploits of the Barbarians, destined shortly to root out the Roman name.

name. I must confess to you that I am totally at a loss to comprehend what motives could have induced Monsieur le Beau (of whose knowledge and abilities several persons of great literary merit have entertained a high opinion) to undertake a general History of the Empire of the East. A single volume would have sufficed for the relation of perpetual and invariable calamities. The length of the work written by Monsieur le Beau has actually frightened me. I hear that it is full of erudition. Granted. But, where is the use of that erudition which only brings me acquainted with facts from which I cannot draw the least serviceable instruction? Such are the first ideas which suggested themselves to my mind upon the subject of general Histories. But, I have yet a hundred things to say to you, before I take my leave of points so interesting and important.

CIDAMON.

And we will hear them *all* with pleasure. Surely, I was to blame for not advising Theodosius to write an *universal* History! You smile

smile at this remark. Unless I have mistaken the nature of the doctrine which you endeavoured to inculcate, it seems reasonable to conclude from it that the project of an universal History can issue only from the brain of a madman. How is it possible that, amidst this croud of different objects, an Historian should find out that necessary unity of which you have already spoken? So divided an interest can never affect me with sufficient power to gain over my attachment. When I am in the humour to follow up a People, the Historian must, of course, disgust me as often as he quits them to transport me into some other nation. From such occurrences, of which the narratives are thrown before me in bits and dribblets, it is not possible that I can reap the least instruction: I do not allude to the Universal History by Voltaire, which is, at best, a Pasquinade, only fit for those readers who, taking the words of our Philosophers for its excessive merit, consider it with admiration. But, I speak of Monsieur de Thou, in reading whose works I have felt the fatigue and languor of a traveller, who wanders from city

to city, from province to province, sometimes to the right, sometimes to the left, and always without knowing to what place the road will lead him. Therefore, to get rid of all his narratives, so long, although so short, so vague and incoherent, I determined to take leave of his book as often as he himself took leave of France, not only to pursue his journey through other States, indifferent to me, but to make a voyage to America and to the Indies.

EUGENIUS.

Your reasoning, Cidamon! is just. An Historian ought to be more anxious to discover to his reader that he is judicious and discerning than that he possesses an heap of erudition which will not secure him either confidence, attention or respect, if he endeavors to avail himself of it for the purpose of embracing every object. If Monsieur de Thou is reprehensible for having undertaken the Universal History of an extremely short epoch, what shall we say to the Historian who would entertain

tain us with an account of all the events which have arisen since the creation of the world? I should even doubt whether it were even possible to produce a rational work by confining it to the History of Europe from the Downfall of the Roman Empire. The example of Doctor Robertson is of itself sufficient to render us circumspect and fearful. He certainly is a Writer of uncommon merit; and the judgment, care and industry with which he has studied to the bottom the History of his own Country intitles him to the warmest tribute of applause. Too much encouraged by his first success, he ventured to prefix to his History of Charles the Fifth an account of the Revolutions which the modern States of Europe have experienced since their establishment. Previous to the appearance of the translation of this introduction to the Life of Charles the Fifth, I heard it commended as a master-piece of the art. I waited with the most eager impatience for the translation. At length, it came out. And what was it? An unfinished work, destitute of any depth of investigation, and (to confine myself to that
part

part which relates to the History of France) throwing before me all the errors and all the prejudices of our Historians, whose works had been too hastily and too carelessly examined. Doctor Robertson quotes the President de Montesquieu, Abbé du Bos, the Count de Boulainvilliers, and Abbé DE MABLY. But, it does not appear to me that he understands any of these Writers, because he at once adopts their different opinions which cannot assimilate, and which, forced together, form an indigested mass of historical incongruities.

It is just and fitting that those men who are not, by the misery of their condition, doomed to remain in ignorance of every thing, should know at least a little of the world which they inhabit. They should imbibe from education a general idea of Universal History. In those elements designed for the instruction of young persons whose reason is not yet matured and formed, it is not requisite to unravel all the causes of events, and to display the riches of the several codes of politics. The Writer must, however, possess sufficient understand-
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ing to point out to him the necessity of avoiding all dangerous errors, and the guilt of corrupting the minds and the hearts of his readers, by inducing them to receive national prejudices for established truths. He should limit his pursuits to the task of forming the hearts of his readers, of instructing them by general precepts of morality, of exalting their ideas, and of merely trying the strength of their minds, by throwing before them reflections which stimulate their curiosity, and, if they have *any* genius, invite them to think and to study more particularly the History of either their own country or some nation of still greater celebrity. To facilitate this study, I should think that, instead of following the order of the times, and of mixing and confounding people together who have nothing in common with each other, it were better to adopt the manner of Puffendorff, who treats separately concerning each nation. Yet, his disgusting dryness must be avoided; nor, like *him*, must we consider it sufficient to point out facts which, destitute of details, leave no traces in the memory, and, of course, pall upon the reader.

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The Universal History concerning which I speak should be rather a selection of particular facts, in imitation of Florus, who gives us some idea of the Romans.

The plan of an Universal History might also be formed by comprising within the annals of it some celebrated nations who have succeeded to each other, on the theatre of the world, and some principal events which have been as so many revolutions for mankind.

This is what Trogus Pompeius executed; an author whom we only know from his Abbreviator, whose labors are read almost without the least advantage. If Justin has made no alterations in the order adhered to by the author whom he abridged, it may be affirmed that this Historian did not meditate enough upon the art of arranging and disposing facts; but, I rather think that the Abbreviator had injured his Original, by suppressing the connections and the transactions with which Trogus Pompeius united all the parts of his work. I say this, because much finer things

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Sometimes occur in Justin than can, without flattery, be ascribed to that Writer.

It is upon this plan that Bossuet has written his discourse concerning Universal History; a work, indeed, useless to readers whose understandings are not extremely cultivated, but, formed to continue for ever the delight of those who have taste, talents and discernment to comprehend its merits. What a profound judgment in his choice of events! How well directed a propriety in his manner of submitting them to the consideration of his readers! We perceive Empires forming themselves, growing into maturity and power, tottering, falling, and succeeding to each other! The curiosity of the reader is continually excited to search into the causes of these events which are at once descriptive of all the grandeur and all the imbecility of the affairs of human nature. Under this perplexity, I find a Master who instructs, who guides and who enlightens me. A word from him is sufficient to bring before me a whole History. Pyrrhus (he observes) obtained over the Romans victories

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which

which were his ruin. All his work is full of such expressive strokes; and, without being at the pains to select passages, I quote those which have occurred the first to my remembrance.

Rome (he remarks in another place) bending under the pressure of the attack from Hannibal, owes her preservation to three citizens: Fabius, Marcellus and Scipio. Having painted, with a masterly hand, the philosophy of the Greeks, and exhibited a striking representation of its progress, he subjoins that the Romans possessed another kind of philosophy not consisting either of disputes or of discourses, but formed out of frugality, poverty, the toils of a rustic life of war, the love of their country and of glory; and this Philosophy it was which rendered them the Masters of Italy, and of Carthage.

In the third division of his work, Bossuet remarks that he has run too hastily over the relation of many circumstances to have enjoyed the power of accompanying them with those reflections to which they were intitled.

This acknowledgment does him credit; and I, indeed,

indeed, think that when the Historian reaches the reign of Augustus, or, to speak more properly, the downfall of the Western Empire, he turns rather too short. Upon the wreck of this once formidable power, I can perceive new States arising, and a new order of things; and then it is that my astonished mind expects such remarks as may assist me to bring under my investigation the occurrences of the past and of the future. I may, perhaps, mistake; but, give me leave to tell you that this perusal of the first part might have proved still more agreeable and more instructive, if the Historian, who seems to have lent wings to his reader, had contrived to procure for him some resting places where he might have stopped with his master, in order to unravel and explore the nature of the causes of either the prosperity or the fall of States. If Bossuet had interspersed within the first part of his work those sublime and deep reflections which occur only in the third part, I should imagine that he could not have avoided comparing to the ancient nations those which had arisen upon the ruins of the Empire. He must have

concluded that ignorant Barbarians who seized at once upon the riches and the vices of the Romans were not equal to the restoration of the fine ages of Greece and Rome.

But, these points would draw us into endless lengths, and I should fear to tire you. Besides, it grows late, and we must take our leaves.

THEODOSIUS.

You *must* indulge us a little longer. Another turn in this walk will not trespass *exceedingly* upon your time. You have not yet mentioned a single syllable concerning the temper and coolness with which an Historian should avail himself of his philosophy, and the art which he should use in the preparation of his system;

Sed lateant vires, nec sis in fronte disertus.

I am aware of the necessity of this temper, this coolness and this art; but I am perplexed in my attempts to form a clear and accurate
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idea of the nature of the law which you impose upon Historians. Several have, undoubtedly, obeyed it; for, several at once equally instruct and please me; and, therefore, is it that I would beg the favor of your assistance to enable me to discover by what artifice they have succeeded.

EUGENIUS.

I dare not promise, Theodosius! that, in this particular, I can have the pleasure of gratifying your curiosity. But, let us try. You remember to have read Polybius?

THEODOSIUS.

Certainly. Once I read his work; and never will it escape my recollection that, notwithstanding the wisdom and the depth of his reflections, I then resolved to read it no more. He engrosses my attention to *himself*, in the very moment that I wish to be engaged in the consideration of the actions of those personages whom he brings forward upon the

scene. He cuts his narrative short by a particular kind of dissertations; and, therefore, even whilst I admire it, I ~~cannot~~ turn away from it.

EUGENIUS. Very well And yet I would venture to lay a wager that if this particular kind of dissertations which hung with such a dead weight upon your attention, instead of cutting short the narrative, and making it fatiguing, had rendered it more lively, more animated and more interesting, you would have read it with the greater pleasure; and, nothing could have proved more easy than the accomplishment of this material point. Polybius need only have done what Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon had performed before him; and what, indeed, in imitation of these great models, had been executed by Livy and Sallust. If Herodotus had composed a dissertation on the Monarchy, the popular government and the Aristocracy, in his own name, he must inevitably have tired his reader who, in a fit of impatience, would pass over

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these judicious reflections and hasten to the event. Putting, on the contrary, these politics into the mouth of Otanes, of Megabyfes, and of Darius, the reader assists, with pleasure, at the deliberation, and partakes, with these Persian Chiefs, of that interest by which they all are animated. . . . Let me trouble you with a second example. . . . If Livy had delivered, in his own person, that harangue against luxury, and in support of the *Lex Oppia*, which he gives to Cato the Censor, we must, indeed, have admired him (for, he says most admirable things) but, I should have exclaimed :

Non erat his locus.

Relate; and leave off preaching. And, who could dispute the justice of the reprimand? For, Livy would have acted the insipid part of a pedant, making a parade of his systems of morality; and Cato should have come forward as a Man of rank and opulence; as a Man of Genius; as a Magistrate setting his face against a growing corruption, of which he could foresee the progress, and predict the

consequence ; and as a Patriot contending for the preservation of the Liberty of the Republic.

THEODOSIUS.

This reflection is, certainly, judicious ; and leaves me at no loss to account for that pleasure which I have felt at reading over the works of some particular Historians. But, observe, Eugenius ! that, in this case, you mingle History and Romance together. The Reader will not accept of these speeches as matters of fact. He regards them as the mere work of the Historian ; and, under such circumstances, it is not possible that he should give the least credit to the passages which are before him.

EUGENIUS.

You may safely venture to dismiss your apprehensions upon this account. The pleasure which is felt contributes to the illusion. Readers who seek only amusement will not re-
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proach the Historian that pleases them; and those who, endued with a more exalted understanding, pursue their studies that they may reap additional instruction, are sensible that these speeches were not, at any time, pronounced; but they wish to gather from them the motives, the thoughts and interests of the persons who are brought upon the scene of action; they expect that the Historian, whose duty it was to have investigated all these particulars, should enlighten and guide their judgment; and, therefore, do they thank him for giving his work that turn which strikes forcibly upon their imagination, imparts double life to the impression, and renders truth still more agreeable to their reason. These harangues animate the narrative; we, during some moments, forget the Historian; we maintain an intercourse with the greatest personages of Antiquity; we dive into their secrets; and their lessons are the more deeply engraven upon our hearts. On these occasions, I think myself present at their deliberations, and in the midst of all their business. The whole ceases to prove a relation, and be-

comes an action of which I am the eye-witness.

Never, Theodosius ! can we expect to find an History at once agreeable and instructive without speeches. Strive, for example, to suppress them in Thucydides, and you will sink the work into a lifeless narrative. In such a case, this book, which, under its present form, *Princes and Ministers ought to read, every year, or rather get by heart*, would drop unnoticed from your hands, because you could not discover from it either the genius or the passions or the enterprises of the Greeks, when degenerated from their ancient virtue. Take from Livy his harangues ; and, at once, you take from him one of those chief ornaments by the aid of which he rouses up my imagination and animates my heart. It is from Livy that I have gathered what little knowledge I possess of politics. Admiring his work, I became immediately instructed ; and, perhaps, it would have disgusted me, if, speaking in his own name, he had given way to long, and,

and, consequently, to cold and uninteresting reflections.

But, these speeches are subject to the dominion of rigid laws; and the Historian who dares to violate them is punished by being converted into a miserable declaimer. I must lay it down as a preliminary condition that they never appear except in a case of absolute necessity; that they shall not be employed but on important occasions, where the point in question is either the preservation, the safety, or the glory of the State; or the achievement of some bold and mighty enterprize. Nor is even all this sufficient. It is requisite that the matter under discussion should admit of being examined, by observers of great talents and quick penetration, in different points of view. Above all things, let the Historian avoid the common-place parade of Colledge-loquence. Not a single syllable must be introduced for the sake of shew and ostentation. Consult only reason; give proofs; lead me *thus* along; and render it impossible that I should resist your force of argument. And,
here,

here, Theodosius ! let me observe to you that you *must* perceive the necessity of not neglecting any one of those studies which I have mentioned as the indispensable preparatives for the task of writing History. At one moment, the Historian, under a borrowed mask, will ascend up to the first principles of natural law, and explain the conditions upon which Nature permits Societies to continue in a state of happiness. At another moment, this Historian, exclusively directing his powers to the province of instructing me concerning that polity of the passions which govern and agitate the world, would enable me to discover, amidst their caprices and their errors, that constant track in which they move, and to unravel before-hand from the speeches of the person who engages my attention the causes of either the good or ill fortune which is the consequence of his proceedings. Making these remarks I only describe what I have experienced from the perusal of the Roman History by Livy. Often have I read it ; and always with fresh pleasure. Again and again shall I read it ; and perpetually shall I find beauties

beauties in it which had before escaped me. The facts with which I am the most acquainted will still please me, because I do not know them as Livy has related them. I have not forgotten that after the capture and conflagration of Rome, the Romans wanted to forsake their country, and to transport themselves to Veii; and that Camillus opposed an inclination so pernicious. Falling from the pen of any common Historian, this fact is nothing; but when Camillus becomes the Speaker, I feel myself interested; I actually enjoy the review of all those hopes which aggrandize the virtues of the Romans, and are to conduct them to the sovereignty of the world. Rome issues from her ruins to acquire dominion. I love to follow this Republic in its progress. Does the affair of Cannæ fill the mind with the circumstances of the battle of Allia? Scipio, destined to conquer Hannibal, is a second Camillus. The Speech in which he revives the drooping spirits of the Romans, almost determined to desert their country, assuages the inquietude of the reader. I do not sink under the terror which I feel. Like
 Scipio,

Scipio, I cherish hope, and build my expectation upon that bold, animated, constant and sublime system of politics which is to lead ultimately to the triumph of the Republic.

Thus far as to what concerns instruction; but, with respect to *that* from which we must receive agreeable amusement, you feel at once how principally harangues contribute to this delightful acquisition. They awaken the attention of the reader; they break the monotony of the narration; and they authorise or rather compel the Historian to recur alternately to all the tones of an eloquence, at one moment gentle and attempered, and, at another moment, glowing, rapid and sublime. The Historian, without appearing expressly to throw light upon this part of the subject, in particular, will lay open to me the opinions, the manners and the characters of every eye; he, with success, will put into the mouths of the persons whom he brings forward as the speakers remarks which would offend when coming from himself. [Taste, in this instance, is the slave of consistency; and it

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admires in Camillus that reliance upon auguries which it could not tolerate from Livy, whose History, written under the reign of Augustus, should not bear upon it the slightest impression of ancient superstitions. These speeches serve, also, to fix in the mind of the reader the principal object which ought to engage his attention, and which will give an interesting turn to even the most trivial details. If an Historian, in order to assist my memory, and bring his own remarks into a clearer point of view, should call back circumstances and situations to which he has before referred me, he must *displease* me, because he has lost the power of *pleasing me unexpectedly*. I am, at least, so unjust as to believe that I could not possibly have forgotten what he repeats to me; and I, of course, complain of this unnecessary prating. But, it is far otherwise when either a Captain or a Magistrate addresses himself to those whom he is desirous to convince and to persuade. I then mix (if the expression be allowable) amongst his auditors; and I approve in this Captain or this Magistrate that which I should blame in the Historian. You cannot

cannot help recollecting with what address and art some Historians have availed themselves of harangues, in order to describe, with equal force and grace, the situation of the affairs of a Republic. Sallust, for instance, has taken especial care not to mention, as from himself, such particulars as he puts into the mouth of Adherbal. And why? Because he felt that it would have been improper to have made use of the same turns and the same expressions to paint the spirit of the Romans still governed by their ancient ideas, and yet already sold to avarice. In short (for, it is time to close our conversation) harangues are necessary when the Historian relates an action which ought to astonish, and, perhaps, exalt beyond their usual level those minds that are but of a common cast. As an instance, let me refer you to Manlius who justifies the sentence of death which he pronounced against his son for having vanquished in disobedience to his orders. Even the most abject mind must reflect with admiration upon the conduct of a Father who, endued with such an excess of patriotism and magnanimity, can sacrifice

to

to his Country the life of an affectionately beloved son. Whilst I listen to Manlius, I pity him; whilst I revere his resolution, the title and the name of Father totally subdue me. I should not have dared to imitate Manlius; and yet, I should blush if I could cease to praise him. But, if I can form a judgment from appearances and from feelings, I should have recoiled with dissatisfaction at any apology which Livy might endeavour to make in his own name for this remarkable procedure. I should have considered him as an empty declaimer, vainly striving to adorn himself with a grandeur of the mind to which he was incapable of reaching.

When you write an History, Theodosius! let me advise you to adapt the harangues of all the personages not only to *their* characters, but to the character of the age in which they lived. This rule, prescribed to the Poets by the Masters of the art, should extend equally to Historians. Who could bear, in Thucydides, that Alcibiades and Nicias should both talk in the same stile? In Sallust, we perceive that Marius, Cæsar and

and Cato express themselves in a manner insi-
 directly different from each other. As to Livy,
 he seems actually to have made himself master
 of the several and distinct kinds of eloquence
 peculiar to each of those great men with whose
 speeches he has enriched his work; and,
 therefore, must we place him (with Cicero)
 at the head of that small number of Writers
 of genius whose style perpetually maintains a
 just affinity to the matter on which it is
 employed. In Livy, the subject of either
 Philip or Antiochus would not express himself
 like the citizen of a Republic of Greece.
 The ancients carried this delicacy to the most
 scrupulous extremes. If Thucydides puts into
 the mouth of Brasidas a more long and orna-
 mented discourse than could have been expect-
 ed from a Lacedemonian, he takes care to in-
 form the Reader that Brasidas surpassed in
 eloquence his fellow-citizens. The indirect
 harangues (which are, indeed, almost the
 sole harangues recurred to by the Historians
 of this modern age) are, in their nature,
 cold and languishing. The ancients employ
 them very seldom; and, then, only either
 when

when the question turns upon affairs of less importance; or when it becomes requisite that the narrative should run on with more rapidity.

But, we have reached the end of our walk.

THEODOSIUS.

So much the worse. For, not a little is wanting to bring us to the conclusion of every remark which we are intitled to expect from you upon the subject of History. I am concerned to the last degree that my private affairs unavoidably compel me to go, to-morrow afternoon, into the country. You must permit Cidamon and me to intrude upon your morning.

EUGENIUS.

With all my heart; and I shall expect you with impatience.

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THE SECOND DIALOGUE.

Particular Histories. Their requisite object. Observations on common Rules for all kinds of History.

EUGENIUS.

THEODOSIUS! CIDAMON! Good morning to you both! I had my doubts whether you would have recollected your appointment;

something more material had not deprived me of the pleasure of

ment; but I am most agreeably deceived; and pleased at this obliging punctuality.

THEODORUS.

I, for my own part, have felt a greater eagerness for this interview, because I *must* apply to you for fresh arms against Cidamon. Although I can scarcely help smiling when I perceive him so extremely urgent, yet I must seriously ask you whether you could possibly believe that, in defiance of his own better judgment, and in spite of all your intimidating remarks concerning the difficulty of writing History, he still persists in his endeavors to prevail upon me to commence Historian. I grant that he has had the goodness to confess that I should be rash, indeed, were I to venture upon a *general* History; but, he will not suffer me to decline the task of undertaking a *particular* History. "You shall see" (were his observations to me on our way to have the happiness of meeting you) "that our Aristarchus will soften his directions into something less rigid than the lessons which he gave

"gave us yesterday. Were you to wait for the
 "attainment of that perfection which, in his
 "elevated idea, is absolutely requisite, you must
 "despair of accomplishing any point whatever.
 "But, it is possible to arrive at excellence, yet
 "not be perfect; and can you suppose that the
 "ancient Historians whose works he admires,
 "reads, and will continually read, have left
 "him no particulars to wish for? Has he
 "not dared to criticise Tacitus? I would
 "advise you to exert your talents upon some
 "piece of History which does not require all
 "that preliminary knowledge of which the
 "very statement is so terrifying."

Let me intreat you, Eugenius! to refute this
 erroneous opinion, and to strengthen my at-
 tachments to my favorite state of indolence
 (a Reader and not a Writer) for, this state,
 which I prefer to all others, is, of itself, suf-
 ficiently conducive to my ease and welfare.

EUGENIUS.

Indeed, Theodosius! Cidamon has reason
 on his side. Great is the difference between a
 general

general and a particular History. If I mistake not, we granted yesterday that they were two distinct kinds of writing, requiring, in effect, a different species of knowledge, and, more especially, different abilities. Yet, I should be very cautious of advising you to proceed upon the relation of either this or that particular event. With *your* leave, Cidamon! I shall declare that only to a person without talents, who, yet, has a facility in writing, but, unfortunately is condemned to sell his pen to Booksellers, can it be allowable to say, in the language of command, you *must* produce a work. It was not without reason that, yesterday, I cautiously avoided proposing any subject to Theodosius. He agrees that he has never turned his attention towards the attainment of that kind of knowledge concerning which we have already spoken; and from this I ought to conclude that, if we could even point out to him the event the most favorable for the exercise of the talents of an Historian, he would find himself embarrassed by the multitude and the richness of the resources which were before him; or, rather, he would not
per-

perceive them. He will prove inferior to the personages whom he brings forward upon the scene. He will relate the most important facts without feeling their *whole* importance; and he will detain the attention of the Reader upon trifles which he ought to have neglected. You will find an Historian full of the prejudices of his own times. Fearful of bringing his principles into question, he will shrink back from an adherence to any fixed principle whatsoever; and his uncertain politics will float from one side to the other, as they are driven by the different occurrences. Such have been the majority of our Historians. Readers whose understandings were not *considerably* enlightened, at the first, mentioned them as intitled to the highest reputation; but well-instructed and discerning Readers, at length, condemned them to hide their heads beneath the dust of libraries. A Writer should, for a long space of time previous to the commencement of his endeavors to produce some piece of History, have meditated upon the conclusions which he may be able to draw from it; and, if you recollect what I took

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the liberty of observing to you yesterday with regard to Tacitus, you must admit that there is no Historian who ought not to feel afraid, unless he has habituated himself to the discovery of the causes of events and of the chain by which they are connected.

I, yesterday, also, advised Theodosius to consult his own taste; but, to-day, Cidamon! so much do I repent this counsel that, growing more difficult, and shifting to the opposite side of the question, I shall tell him that he ought not to fix the least dependence upon his own taste, unless it be enlightened and refined by our preliminary studies. I do not think like our Philosophers. I am aware that, without understanding, nothing good can possibly arise; but, these Philosophers prove to me that, from much understanding and presumption together, only middling and almost bad works are the produce of their labors. They first make a fantastical choice; they next examine it in a confined and sordid point of view, and often end by framing it into some absurd and inconsistent plan. Do not imagine that I speak

at

at random, upon this occasion. I have, indeed, before my eyes an example which makes me tremble for the *doers* of History. Father Bougeant was, certainly, a man of great understanding; and, though his Jesuit's robe reduced him to the necessity of wearing *some* painful literary fetters, we may with ease discover that he possessed great talents for the arduous task of writing History. He knew the human heart, the caprices and the wiles of all the passions. On a multitude of occasions, we must observe that he perceived the truth; and that he would have brought it forward in the fullest and most striking points of view, if his superiors had not compelled him to accommodate his writings to the purpose of advancing the interests of the society. His touches are glowing, bold and spirited. Observe how he paints Valslein, who finds a consolation in his disgrace, when he perceives that the misfortunes of the empire have made it necessary. His pictures are full of life and animation; and he follows the rapid progress of Gustavus Adolphus. His remarks have often the brevity of the reflections of the an-

cients. Artfully intermingled with the narration, they support instead of sinking it into languor: and they occasion every reader who is capable of meditating to give a scope and exercise to his thoughts.

How were these talents thrown away upon Father Bougeant! And never will he be placed amongst the number of good Historians, because he has made a bad choice; or, rather, because engaged upon a most important event, he attached himself only to that party which he ought to have neglected. Confounding politics with intrigue, he suffers himself to be overcome by the reputation of Count D'Avaux (who, in fact, had more merit than was necessary to render him the first negociator of *his* time) and by the friendship of the President de M^eme who wanted, most improperly, to convert his relation into the Hero of an important History. Instead of the great objects which I naturally look for, instead of the liberty of conscience, the liberty of the Empire, and a new system of power, of views, and interests which embraces

braces and unites the North and South of Europe, the Historian, who knows not either his own dignity or his duty, will plague me only with an account of our artifices, and of all those stale and insipid manœuvres which are the leading features of our modern negotiations. He will eternally propose conditions of peace for men who are averse from peace; and who, mistrusting each other, will waste their time upon the investigation of trifles concerning which they cannot come to any ultimate decision.

Yet, Father Bougeant, who had more understanding than the greater part of the Negotiators to whom he endeavors to give an air of consequence, has felt, at every moment, how much his subject was flat and unprofitable. He has experienced that *negotiations subordinate, by the nature of things, to the events of war, and dictated by the little passions of Courts, and the particular views and interests of their Prime Ministers, cannot be related in detail without dishonoring the page of History.* I take it as an obligation, and I applaud his understand-

ing when he himself grows tired of having so seriously dealt out to his readers all the non-sensical absurdities with which his work is filled. His pen, so lively in tracing out the military expeditions, becomes dull and weakened under the recital of negotiations. The languor which oppresses him serves as his warning that it will fall, at length, with equal weight upon the reader of discernment. Then, should he have relinquished his undertaking; or, rather have extricated himself from all the fine spun artifices of negociators, in order to have engaged our attention exclusively upon the *real* causes of the peace. But, whether from the want of a sufficiently enlightened penetration, whether from complaisance or from false shame, he was no longer his own master; and the circumstance for which I cannot forgive him is: that to encourage his reader, and to rally his own powers and spirits, he has asserted that *it would argue but little knowledge of the art of carrying on negotiations, were the person engaged in them to plume himself upon that frankness which scorns to dissemble upon any occasion whatsoever, and which affords to others*
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the opportunity of penetrating into the grounds of his most secret intentions. (He adds that) a skilful Negotiator explains himself only during a case of necessity; and then always with reserve. He even sometimes affects to contradict himself, to appear to change his views and ideas, to despise that which he dreads, and to apprehend that for which he wishes. Thus, does he render himself impenetrable; and unless the other party stands extremely upon his guard, he pierces with the more ease into his actual sentiments.

We have, here, a Writer endued with much understanding, who will deserve the censure of the intelligent readers, and deceive the others by making them set a value upon that art of putting off a falsity to advantage which may be requisite at an intriguing Court, but which must prove always useless, and even dangerous in the administration of public affairs. If Father Bougeant had prepared himself for the task of writing History, it is impossible that he could have worked himself up into such an illusion. The Peace of *Westphalia*, which has given a constant form to the

government of the Empire, and equal laws to Religions which hated each other, which has changed the political system of Europe, lowered the House of Austria, and exalted France, by fixing, at a certain point, the interests of nations, would have appeared to him as one of the most memorable events which has arisen in these later times. Are you not, Cidamon! of opinion that the Historian would have formed more just and more exalted ideas of his subject? Instead of fatiguing me with a detail of long negociations which lead to no serviceable end, he would have informed me how ambition and fanaticism, supported by great talents, and even by some great virtues, had kindled up the flames of war, and kept them blazing, during thirty years, by drawing out and forcing into action all the springs of government. He would then have explained to me how ambition and fanaticism avail themselves of each other, and become fatigued by venturing upon exertions beyond their strength. Proportionably with the enfeebled state of these passions, should I have discovered the approach of peace. The Historian, thus de-

describing the causes of peace would only have mentioned negociations to inform me that France and Sweden, perpetually united, in despite of their jealousy of each other, had the art not only to intice away from the Emperor his allies, but even to force him, by these means, to consent to the conditions of a treaty which ruined the politics of Charles the Fifth, or, rather which suspended their effects.

CIDAMON.

I am concerned, Eugenius ! that, upon this occasion, our sentiments do not coincide. But, you must permit me to interrupt you, and to assure you that your reasoning has not brought me over intirely to your opinion. Should not History prove a faithful picture of the past ? Pray answer me this question.

EUGENIUS.

Undoubtedly.

CIDAMON.

Then, give me leave to tie you down to this point. And, why do you conclude that Father Bougeant is in the wrong for having offered to us the details of which you complain? Are they not necessary to bring me acquainted with the morals, the genius, the manners and the politics of Europe?

EUGENIUS.

But, give *me* leave, Cidamon! to ask you in *my* turn whether, if, by chance, I find no reason in the least to value this wonderful source of knowledge, Father Bougeant would not be censurable for lavishing the whole upon me? Could I not form a true and accurate idea of our negociations at Westphalia, should the Historian tell me that the Plenipotentiaries were treating, during a length of time, for peace, when there was no desire to conclude it, and when each power, under the flattering hope of supplying a deficiency of strength by artifice, had recourse to
all

all the means which it was possible for intrigue and falsehood to suggest.

Recollect with what dignity negotiations are discussed by the ancient Historians.

CIDAMON.

I grant it; and I am sensible that the *Greeks* and *Romans*, in their happier and more splendid times, *negociated with a sincere regard to the preservation of good faith, or with a noble pride to which we actually are strangers. . . .* Their History painted what passed at that period; but, *our* History ought to paint what passes at the present epoch. I envy the good fortune of the ancient Historians, and I pity our modern Historians. But, I do not blame them.

EUGENIUS.

Very well. Yet, remember, Cidamon! that, overpowered by prosperity and pride, these *Greeks* and *Romans* became corrupted. You will not, however, find that *Thucydides* has

has sullied his History with the detail of those miserable expedients, those wiles which Greece already began too generally to practice. Does Sallust trouble you with the particulars of the negociations of Jugurtha with the Romans, and of the artifices of his Ambassador? No. He is satisfied with informing us that all was venal at Rome, and that Jugurtha sent thither large sums of money. Follow Sylla into the Court of Bocchus. Never was an affair more difficult, intricate and important. Doubtless, agreeably to the fine precept of Father Bougeant, they dissembled, they told falsties, they affected either to entertain apprehensions, or to rise above the influence of fear, and they submitted to each other a thousand illusive propositions of which no person became the dupe. Would Sallust have fatigued the Reader with these disgusting details, which might, indeed, have proved, from Sylla, at his return, an entertainment to his familiar friends? Far from it. He cautiously avoids so reprehensible a procedure. All is described within the compass of two pages; and the Historian, having represented Bocchus as float-
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ing between Jugurtha, whom he dares not abandon, and the Romans, of whose resentment he stands in dread, at length, decides in favor of Sylla.

CIDAMON.

I confess the justice of your remark. This little piece of historical writing is beautiful in the extreme. Yet, to speak sincerely, I should not have been concerned if Sallust had somewhat spoiled it by entering into all the details relative to the conduct of so able a negociator as Sylla. I then could have drawn together for my use certain principles of this science or art which is at once so difficult and so necessary.

EUGENIUS.

Indeed, indeed, Cidamon! you are mistaken. For, these measures which Sylla found successful in Mauritania would, probably, have proved of no service to him in any other country, or during his negotiations with
any

any other Prince except Bocchus. Let me ask you what you could seriously expect to learn from these details? That a negociator, in order to succeed, ought to begin by pleasing the person with whom he treats, and then, by turns to fill his mind with hopes and fears? Sallust will tell you as much in two pages; and this, if I mistake not, is all which any sensible reader can desire. What benefit could you reap from any of the negotiations mentioned by Father Bougeant who leaves upon the mind no fixed and settled principle? If his details fatigue you, I give you joy; it is a proof that you are not a dupe to your Historian. If they amuse you, so much the worse; for, I should predict, from this circumstance, that your inclinations would lead you to esteem craft, and set but little value upon abilities.

CIDAMON.

Be that as it may, from a conviction that I shall never be intrusted with the management of the affairs of any Potentate, I willingly

ingly give up to you the system of my politics. And here, I *must* acknowledge that I *cannot* accommodate my mind to the austerity of your principles. I love details; they amuse me; they explain to me the springs which govern and direct the affairs of this world.

EUGENIUS.

And, do you really think that these details are less acceptable to *me*? If my memory does not fail me, I told you, yesterday, that even the slightest details are interesting in a *general* History, when they describe to us the manner in which the government, the laws, the morals, the character and the genius of a People have been formed, or rather have undergone some alteration. Nor are details less interesting in a *particular* History, if they unravel the causes of either the success, or the unfortunate miscarriage of that event which is related to me. But, all which does not lead to this point should be retrenched without mercy. Properly to support this moderation in the use of details, it is requisite that
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the Historian should possess a discernment, an admirable taste, and a mind truly philosophic. The first rule of History is to proceed rapidly to the end in view. Whatsoever impedes its progress, displeases; and *always should displease*. I wish to know the obstacles that are opposed to the success which I expect; but, I require that these obstacles should prove *true* obstacles, and not those ridiculous and silly trifles which cannot interest, or give concern to the warrior, the politician or even the enlightened reader. On this occasion, Cidamon! let us not confound one species with another. A hundred little details, a hundred anecdotes which are exceedingly agreeable either in memoirs or in the dispatches of Ambassadors would disgrace the page of History. But, let us permit these Writers to set down every thing. They will not prove useless to an Historian; and even a Philosopher may draw from this dunghill of Ennius spangles of gold when he presents us with some treatise concerning one of the branches either of politics or of administration.

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At all events, the choice of a subject for a particular History is a matter of the utmost importance. Take (I should observe to an Historian who distrusts his powers) some event which claims and merits the attention of mankind. Otherwise, you will run the risque of proving tedious and fatiguing to your readers. If the personages whom you bring forward upon the scene possess great merit, their talents will support you. Then, your mind will rise to every necessary heighth, without an effort. If you have any abilities for writing, your stile will become more animated, more noble and, consequently, more attractive. You will have no need to strive to awaken my attention, either by digressions, or by foreign arguments, which always prove vicious from the moment that they cease from being requisite. Were such a man as Tacitus to do me the honor to ask my advice, I should say to him: Every subject is worthy of *your* notice; and from the strokes of *your* pen *must* come forward with embellishments. A great Prince, a Tyrant, a good Man, a Senate, either prostituting themselves to gain favor,

or

or preyed upon by their own fears; a Court corrupted by freed-men, by slaves and players; in short, *any thing*, no matter what, would grow into importance under the exercise of *your* abilities; and you perpetually *must* present to us a sublime and interesting picture. If we except those readers whose perusal of books should be confined solely to Romances, let us admit that the rest will not remain satisfied with a barren pleasure. They seek for instruction; because instruction is the aliment of a good and properly disposed mind. The Historian should, therefore, offer to me a moral and a political truth in the event which he relates. This is the rule proposed to themselves by Thucydides, Sallust, Herodian, and even Plutarch who, the more certainly to instruct us, has always taken care that his heroes should engage in great events.

Our modern times are not destitute of fertile subjects. Subsequent to the fall of the Roman empire, Europe has undergone a multitude of revolutions which have imperiously decided upon our manners, our prejudices,
our

our laws, our morals and our politics. The taste and passion of the Medicis for the fine arts, the discovery of America, and the settlement of the Europeans in the Indies ! What an immense field do these open to the Historian ! But, without dwelling upon foreign subjects, do we not find within our own annals several epochs which deserve to be written by an accomplished hand ? We do not want events, Cidamon ! but Historians : Historians capable of unravelling their causes and their effects.

Our Historians have stood, without perceiving their situation, as it were, in the very midst of the greatest revolutions. The reigns of Saint Louis, of Philip the Fair and of Charles the Fifth do not instruct me concerning those points of which I am anxious to acquire the most knowledge. Historians succeed Historians, and fall, successively, into the oblivion which awaits them. I am concerned that the President de Montesquieu, so filled with Tacitus, unfortunately lost the Life (which he had written) of Louis the Eleventh.

Eleventh. To judge from appearances, I could, there, have proposed a model for your imitation. His reflections upon the causes of the grandeur and the declension of the Romans form an excellent treatise of politics; and he had, also, turned his thoughts to the nature of our ancient government. Having perceived that the *French* had abandoned themselves (if I may use the expression) to the current of their passions, and of events, who could have proved more capable than Montesquieu of unfolding the secret mysteries of that celebrated epoch, when Louis the Eleventh rendered his successors absolute. *He* would have furnished us with a striking picture of the battle of the ancient prejudices against the new. These ought to triumph; and new abuses must succeed abuses of the ancient date.

But, if I cannot refer you to a work which would have merited the highest praise, I can speak of another History of the same Prince. It is most truly a master-piece in its kind. It is the History written by Duclos. Not possessed even of the merit of having collected together

together his materials ; a circumstance which *must*, sometimes, have reduced him to the necessity of reflecting and of thinking, he has laboured upon indigested and wildly scattered extracts from Abbé le Grand ; and thus do we perceive that the Historian is ignorant of every occurrence immediately previous to the facts which he relates, of the important and valuable circumstances which accompany them, and of the necessary consequences which ought to result *from* them. It is impossible properly to relate any particular national event without a knowledge of the general History of the nation ; and I could venture to lay a wager that Duclos had not read even Mezeray, or Father Daniel, to prepare himself for writing the History of Louis the Eleventh. Vitiated by the philosophy the progress of which amongst us has been so rapid and extensive, by comfortably associating the most absurd presumption with the deepest ignorance, he boasted that he could teach the learned the mode of writing History ! Yet, *unfortunately*, this Preceptor has lost himself in that croud of obscure Historians whose works are no longer read ; and

I fear

I fear that his successors, without striving to imitate him, have experienced the same disgrace.

But, we have a piece of History which, on several accounts, may be compared to the most beautiful productions of the kind amongst the Ancients; and this is the History of the Revolutions of Sweden by Abbé de Vertot. How charming is the perusal of this work! In every line, I trace an Historian who, having meditated upon the nature of the human heart, had acquired a consummate knowledge of the progress and the polity of the passions. Livy, whose History occupied *all* his ideas when he wrote the Revolutions of the Roman Republic, had learned him the secrets of his art. I mentioned to you, yesterday, that kind of embarrassment which we experienced during the perusal of the History of the Revolutions of Rome; but, we shall meet with none of it when reading the History of the Revolutions of Sweden. The Historian unravels for me all the causes of events; I do not lose from my view the chain by which

which they are connected ; and I follow, in his track, continually feeling a new pleasure,

And now, Cidamon ! in order to pay my court to the indolence of Theodosius, who calls upon me for succors against your persecuting spirit, I will confess to you that this work, in other passages so beautiful and highly finished, is disfigured in some places where the author leaves us an opening to discover that he himself is in want of some of that *troublesome* preliminary knowledge concerning which we have already spoken. For example, I wish that he had not so vaguely charged the liberty of the Swedes as the cause of all their misfortunes. It is with concern that I observe the Historian confounding licentiousness, which will not bear the least restraint, with liberty, which is conscious that it cannot exist, unless it preserves its love and reverence for the laws. Had he prepared himself for writing History by meditating upon the nature of the different governments, and those vices and virtues which accompany them, and which must either secure or destroy them, I am of
opinion

opinion that he would have taken great care not to use the vague expression, *excessive liberty*, when speaking of the Gothic Anarchy of the Swedes. In this part of the work, I no longer feel my ground; and I am under the necessity of deliberately weighing circumstances in my own mind, lest I should adopt for *truths* those errors which Abbé de Vertot has thrown before me.

Nor is this all. If this Historian had *properly* contemplated the views of nature, and that system of politics which she exacts from us, he, doubtless, would not have represented the alterations which Gustavus Vasa introduced within the forms of government as the supreme felicity of the Swedes. He should have remained satisfied with declaring that, considering the unfortunate predicament in which Sweden stood, the acts of rendering the crown hereditary, and of lowering the power and influence of an ambitious Clergy who could not govern without the aid of troubles and intrigue, were the wisest measures which it was possible to carry into execution; because

because factions, parties and animosities would not admit of a recourse to means more efficacious. He should have explained to me that the Swedes, still floating in a state of uncertainty, between the manners which resulted from their ancient anarchy, and those which were prepared for them under an hereditary monarchy, found themselves in a precarious situation. They had, indeed, escaped from Scylla; but, were they not in danger of being dashed to pieces against Charybdis? *This* the Historian should have foreseen; and *his* more clear and accurate ideas would have confirmed my own. Unless I am deceived, even whilst I trembled for the future, would he have inspired me with a more lively, tender and interested anxiety for the fortune of the Swedes. Having attended to Gustavus Vasa, I naturally must have turned my eyes upon his successors, and thus, floating between hope and fear, what obligations should I not have lain under to the Writer who had illuminated my understanding? Hence am I enabled to meditate wherein consists this great art; this supreme art of an Historian.

All the subjects for selection in writing a particular History are not so fortunately circumstanced as those which I have just mentioned, and which effect a change in the manners, the morals, the laws and the constitution of a State. Under this class of particular Histories, I should place those important events which ought, certainly, to be rescued from oblivion. Chuse (I should again say to the Historian) facts calculated either to inspire me with noble and elevated sentiments, or to replenish my mind with more consummate knowledge; for, I must naturally feel an attachment to the Writer who raises me, as it were, above myself, and who, removing the limits of my reason, gives scope to its activity. Such an History must present to me great obstacles and great dangers, over all of which exalted virtues and distinguished talents are seen to triumph. Then, does the Writer raise my curiosity; then, is he sure of my attention, because I feel, during the perusal of his work, that pleasing emotion which so often fills the mind, during representations on the theatre; then, does he supply that which could

could not have been in the power of my unassisted inexperience to procure; and I am the more satisfied with *him*, because I am the more satisfied with myself. Such is the History of the retreat of the ten thousand, by *Xenophon*. Yielding to the irresistible but welcome violence of compulsion, the Reader unavoidably enters into the *suite* of the Greeks; he becomes the sharer in their pains, their perils, their toils and their inquietudes. He fears, he hopes, he admires; and, sometimes, he is disposed to ask why it is not, at present, possible to find, in *all* Europe, *ten thousand* Greeks and one *Xenophon*. Let him listen to the Historian, and he will acquaint him with the reason.

A model equally perfect in its kind, and in the study of which it would prove difficult for the Reader to employ too great a portion of his time, is *Cæsar*, in his Commentaries on the war against the Gauls. With great reason has *Cicero* observed that, *apparently*, presenting only materials, or memoirs for an History, *Cæsar* composed from them a perfect History:

One might be tempted to conceive that these particular pieces do not demand from an Historian all that knowledge which I have hitherto exacted. In fact, he would not have occasion to display it as if he were writing either a general History or the relation of some revolution. But, granting that he does not possess this knowledge, shall I discover an Historian superior, like Xenophon and Cæsar, to the subject of which he treats? In the general of the ten thousand, I am pleased to perceive the disciple of Socrates. With less ability, he would have proved less clear and less attractive. With respect to Cæsar, is he not indebted for his happy brevity to that profound genius which, having meditated upon the vices, the resources, and the liberty of his country, and which, assisting him in the conquest of Gaul, facilitated his preparations to reduce it under the yoke of servitude? An expression, even a single word, as if thrown out by accident, is sufficient, when proceeding from *such* Historians, to enlighten me upon my progress. I move forward with rapidity, and experience none of that fatigue
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and languor which are occasioned by the narrator who doubts, and hesitates at every step, and sees only by halves, or under perplexed points of view, the causes of the facts which he relates?

Sallust, in a different manner, records an event which, although not the cause of any revolution amongst the Romans, is equally calculated to instruct me and to attach me to his subject, because he discovers to me that the Republic, no longer deriving a support from its institutions, but only from the merit of some of its best citizens, must lose that liberty of which it ceases to remain deserving. Wherefore (I naturally ask) does Jugurtha, so inferior to Hannibal, hold, like *him*, within the balance, the genius and the fortune of the Masters of the World? It is (answers the Historian) because the Romans sacrifice every consideration to their avarice; whereas, heretofore, they sacrificed every consideration to their love for their Country. Discovering their concern and anxiety for the fate of a war which, in the estimation of their fathers,

would have been regarded as a trifle, I learn from Sallust that it is possible even with a large Empire to possess only a slight degree of strength, and that great conquests, by which the Victors imagine that they must acquire more power, serve only to enfeeble and to diminish it. This first truth throws open to my view a thousand more. I call to mind what I have read in the account of the Catalinarian conspiracy. I peruse it a second time, and with a degree of pleasure beyond that which I experienced before. Why? Because the more I read Sallust, the more I appear *worthy* to read him. Amongst mankind and in all human affairs, the connection is preserved. I see the vices which, in consequence of an unfortunate, but necessary progress, have formed a Cataline, and which will not cease to produce citizens equally pernicious. On this occasion, I feel an attachment to the Historian who has made me a Philosopher, whilst I read only for amusement.

Pemit me, Theodosius! to return to my *good* Father Bougeant. Can you seriously believe

lieve that the three Historians, concerning whom I have spoken, would have discovered nothing more great and important in the war of thirty years than the Count D'Avaux who negociated the peace? Sallust had too much discernment to cast the principal character in the piece for Sylla, who would not have obtained a single concession from Bocchus, if this Monarch had not regarded Marius with terror. Would not Sallust have discovered, under the false prosperity of France, that disposition which, afterwards, inclined us to make an ill use of it, and to follow the dictates of that ambition for which we levelled our reproaches against the House of *Austria*? These three Historians, whom every Writer in the same walk of literature should fix upon as his models, neglect all those idle details which have not the power either to influence or to decide upon the nature, progress, effect and consequence of any fact whatever. In order to instruct, they teach me what is owing to the abilities, the wisdom and the experience of the chiefs and the subalterns. To render me more circumspect and wary, they explain

to me what results from the caprices of fortune, which a truly great man sometimes corrects, and improves to advantage; and of which a person of moderate talents but seldom avails himself; and even, *then*, imperfectly. In their Writings, Xenophon and Cæsar, undoubtedly, were desirous of forming great Captains; but, they have not begun by fatiguing their military Readers when their chief and most important object was to instruct them. If Father Bougeant felt a sincere desire to prove the instrument of making able Negotiators, he should, with equal prudence and caution, have suppressed all useless details; and, more particularly, he *should not* have invited his Readers to set a high value upon that *artifice and cunning which are a detriment to the success of all negotiations, because they destroy all confidence.*

Nor, Theodosius! does the matter rest *here*. We have, also, some pieces of History not designed to bring before us a *particular* event, but only those celebrated men who have appeared in certain nations. Such is the interesting

resting object which Plutarch had in view; and this Historian is the most perfect model in the kind. He wants, indeed, some of those great points of knowledge, concerning which I shall incessantly speak to you, because they never were either more rare or more neglected; yet, I can grant my pardon for *any thing* to an Historian who has the secret of gaining over my confidence and my friendship. If *such* a Writer deceives me, it is because he actually was deceived himself. He would have shewn me the truth, if it had not escaped from his researches. Besides, the political errors of an Historian will not prove either extremely dangerous or extremely serious in their consequences, provided that his moral system should be at once irreprehensible and correct. But, the fact is, that were you attentively to read Plutarch, you must perceive that he puts arms into your hands with which you may contend against him. Never does he start aside, or wander from the road of nature. He dives into the abyss of the human heart; and, *there*, exploring all its secret windings and recesses, he gets possession, without efforts and without subtilty,

subtlety, of the seeds of either the virtues or of the vices. Never does he present to us fantastic individuals; like those unskilful Historians who imagine that they degrade their *heroes*, if, sometimes, they permit them to appear as *men*. The heroes of Plutarch descend, as it were, down to a level with myself, and excite in me either an inclination or a temerity to soar up to *them*. What is the secret power by which Plutarch at once pleases and attracts me? It is that he appears less inclined to instruct me than merely to converse with me. Besides,

he only places in my view either great virtues or great talents; far different, in this respect, from those insipid Historians who have written such a multitude of volumes containing the lives of the illustrious men of our modern times. They imagined that it was sufficient if *their* heroes possessed high dignities (the burthen of which they had not either virtues or talents to support) and they concluded that this elevation to honors and preferments *must* render them, without the aid of any other advantage, intitled to the notice of posterity. Shall I venture, upon this occasion, to trust

you

you with my real sentiments? I think that our political constitutions, by classing the citizens in different orders, have streightened and confined their genius, and will not permit us to hope for another Plutarch.

The stile of Cornelius Nepos has met with commendations; and some persons have even asserted that his work produces a *slight* spark of that political genius which was still common at Rome, and particularly in the moment when the Republic was observed to totter; *that* Republic the fall of which would have been regretted, but for the design already formed to rise upon its ruins. Yet, in truth, the writings of Cornelius Nepos are fit only to entertain children. Why does not this Historian enter into, at least, one of those necessary details which might have furnished the Reader with some knowledge of his Heroes? "You imagine" (might we observe to him) "that you have attained to conciseness; but, all is sterility; for you have suppressed those essential circumstances of which a curious and intelligent Reader would naturally expect that you should give him the relation."

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In fact, Theodosius! details apparently the the most trifling and frivolous acquire an infinite value when they assist me to discover and unravel the caprices and the fantastic humours of Nature, who sometimes diverts herself by forming men so great and little, in different respects, and by associating within their minds and hearts those qualities and passions which are so contrary to each other. In every other History, proceed rapidly to the event; but, in this, go on slowly; for, it is necessary to discover the various windings and intricacies of the human heart. The illustrious men of Plutarch assist me to acquire a fuller knowledge, and to form a juster idea of those who are my contemporaries, and with whom I live.

I know not whether I ought to mention Suetonius, whom few persons would take the pains to read, if the rage of time had not deprived us of a part of the writings of Tacitus. This Historian, born at the commencement of the reign of Vespasian, endued with little understanding and still less elevation of mind, could not discover that the arduous subject of
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which he treated was a Revolution the most important for a People Masters of the Universe, in the preceding times so jealous of their liberty, but, at length, moulded to servitude, under the yoke which was cast upon them by the light and dexterous hand of Augustus. Suetonius (if I may use the expression) saw none of the different shades of this Revolution. Tiberius, equally jealous of his authority, timid, suspicious and cruel, did not perceive that the Romans were incapable of recovering their liberty; and that, shortly after his decease, they would not even regret the loss of it. But, his Historian, more enlightened, should have afforded us a stronger proof of penetration. Whatsoever is great, or does not strike grossly upon the senses escapes the observation of Suetonius. Do not expect to discover from his writings the genius, the ambition and the politics of Cæsar. Suetonius will never trace out the Prince in the Emperor; nor judge of the man, but by the most absurd and stupid standard. He will tell you that Augustus, possessed of all the authority of an absolute Prince, regarded as an
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injury the title of Master, or of Lord. *Domini appellationem ut maledictum et opprobrium semper exhorruit.* In another place, he will assure you that this Emperor, the most artful and wary of all tyrants, and the most jealous of his power, laboured incessantly to cement an union of different minds, and to conciliate interests the most opposite in their nature; *promptissimus affinitatis cujusque amicitiae conciliator et fautor.*

Let me intreat you to recollect how this poor Historian, who believes every thing which is said to him, and who sinks underneath the weight of his History, enters upon the Life of Augustus. He does not propose (he tells us) to adhere strictly to chronological order, but to distribute the relation of the actions of this Prince into different classes, all referring to their proper object. He flatters himself that by this method he shall be able to present the Reader with a more striking likeness of Augustus; but, *such* a method was, in fact, calculated to produce a quite contrary effect. And *thus* it happened; for, it is impossible to follow up, in just succession, his birth,

birth, the developement and the progress of his fortune, of his hopes, of his fears, of his manners, of his morals and of his politics. We perceive not either the influence of the *character* of Augustus over *events*, or the influence of *events* over the *character* of Augustus. This Prince, who has always been the same, changes his conduct at every instant; and I no longer trace out this ambitious man who is sufficiently supple to assume, by turns, the forms which are the most subservient and useful to the purposes of his ambition. A Reader endued with no more knowledge and discernment than Suetonius might put up with these absurdities; but, if we really wish to acquire clear and just ideas of the character of Augustus, we must undo the composition of Suetonius, and throw his work into another method. It is only by giving a new place to these misshapen and ill-arranged materials that we can acquire any knowledge of a most extraordinary man, whose passions, most ably regulated, constant and always the same, but sometimes more free and sometimes more restrained, at length, triumphed over the passions.

fions of the Romans, by appearing to humour
 them and give them ample play. I must
 make one remark upon the folly with which
 he converts Nero into two different kinds of
 men. I, at the first (he observes) collected
 together into one point all the actions of this
 Prince which were either indifferent, or even
 merited some applause, in order that I might
 not confound them with his baseness, his pu-
 fanimity and his horrid and abominable vices.
 What could have been more foolish than this
 division of a man into two parts? Could Sue-
 tonius have taken a surer method to offend
 and to disgust a Reader endued with any por-
 tion whatsoever of common sense? I, for my
 own part, should have wished to discover the
progress of the passions and the vices, and in
what manner the habitude of some virtues
 comes forward to resist them. Has morality
 nothing to gain by observing the extreme fra-
 gility of the human heart, and that monstrous
 audacity with which it can, at length, fami-
 liarise itself to acts of turpitude? I should
 have liked to perceive those passages by which
 Nero, at first repressed by fear, next by some
 slight

slight fits of ineffectual remorse, at length, reached the fullness of his obstinate and incurable wickedness. I think that I should have drawn from this discovery a multitude of great moral and political truths.

Were I not already tired, Cidamon I with the long use of this severe language of criticism, I could direct your attention to I know not how many modern Historians who have written the Lives of Princes almost as awkwardly as Suetonius.

CIDAMON.

That I, indeed, believe; and, even whilst you were speaking to us, have I applied your doctrine to more than one modern Suetonius. Yet, I excuse them; I even praise them, and think myself obliged to them for the pleasure which I have experienced from their researches. But, let us drop all *this*. What benefit can we reap from your reflections whilst they continue so outrageously severe? I should be sorry to find you determined to publish all this reasoning

ing and these arguments in any particular work. You would discourage the majority of Writers. Theodosius, whom I had converted, is now on the point of escaping out of my hands, and several others, imitating his example, would become the dupes to that panic into which you actually throw them. No person will dare to write History.

EUGENIUS.

Assure yourself, the contrary will prove the case. So long as the world produces fools, prattlers, inquisitive triflers, and busy-bodies, there cannot be a dearth of bad Historians.

*Pugnas et exactos tyrannos
Densum humeris bibit aure vulgus.*

The more a Writer wants talents and knowledge the less will he be able to form a judgment of the strength of his capacity; and foolish Readers will always create a multitude of foolish Authors. As to the men of genius, they will pursue the dictates of their abilities, and, in proportion to the justice of the ideas which

which they may form of History, will they prepare themselves to write it, by their meditations and their sagacious studies. *Such* knowledge, far from discouraging, will supply them with fresh powers ; and they will struggle to surpass themselves, by their anxiety to reach that perfection from which they always must remain at a considerable distance. If Cicero was in the right to place before us the picture of such an orator as *never* can be found, wherefore am I to blame if, following his example, I search for a perfect Historian ? Let us learn, Cidamon ! to value and to entertain some hopes from the self-love of mankind. It augments the confidence of fools ; but, it supports Writers of superior merit under their enterprizes. Can you believe that Livy was not satisfied with himself because he discovered that he could not attain to that perfection which, sometimes, flew from his pursuit ? Be persuaded of *this* truth : that if Theodosius had been 'born an Historian, my reflections, far from intimidating him, would have inspired him with redoubled courage ; and he would have perceived with pleasure what an

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increase of glory awaited his triumphs over all the obstacles which might present themselves in his career.

THEODOSIUS.

'This is well. I am totally of your opinion. I most clearly perceive that you would not discourage me, were I at all conversant in that preliminary knowledge which you require from an Historian; if I felt myself endued with that deliberate and patient constancy which is alone equal to the discovery and the investigation of truth; and could I flatter myself that my imagination, not sinking into a cold languor under this arduous kind of toil, would maintain a sufficient portion of vivacity to present facts with that force, that energy and those graces of which they are susceptible. But, if you have turned my mind against the attempt to write History, at least you have taught me to read it with more pleasure. Let me intreat you to continue your reflections. I perceive how an Historian ought to instruct; but I must beg the favor of you to discover to me by what art he

pleases

pleases and brings me over to his side. Wherefore am I not, at any time, fatigued by his lively, rapid and animated narration? What secret power enables him to awaken my attention, whilst he never ceases to address himself to my reason? I wish to account to myself for either the pleasure or the languor which I experience when perusing Histories. To good Historians, I should stand indebted for the first; nor should I want consolation during the perusal of the works of bad Historians, inasmuch as it must prove agreeable to discover the source or the causes of my disgust.

EUGENIUS.

As this kind of conversation seems not unwelcome to you, with *your* leave, we will proceed. I think, Theodosius! that the remarks with which I have as yet taken the liberty to intrude upon your attention must have enabled you to ascertain the principles of the art by which an Historian can please and draw over to his side all readers of understanding and discernment. As to the rest, they are not worth a thought; and the most
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incoherent and dislocated History will enchant them, provided that it strikes them with astonishment; that it flatters the fashionable prejudices, and lavishes, not as the effect of choice and of necessity, long reflections, either inextricably intricate, or groundlessly presumptuous. But, *such* a multitude, and all so ready to admire, will abandon this History, in the moment that a new and equally exceptionable Historian starts up; a fresh object of their attention. For *my* part (and I humbly conceive that I may venture to place myself in the list of rational readers) no History would please me which does not address itself to my understanding. It is at this point that it *must* actually begin. No pedantry must mingle with the instruction which is to be set before me; for, *that* would render it fatiguing and disgusting. To please discerning Readers, it ought, in some measure, to escape the attention of all others. Such is the method adopted by the great Historians whom we have made the subject of our remarks. The majority of Readers perceive in Thucydides, in Livy, in Sallust and in Tacitus only a heap of facts,

facts, each clinging to the other. They peruse the works of these Authors but with a moderate degree of satisfaction, because they do not see any of those brilliant rays which catch the observation of enlightened Readers. As to myself, I am charmed when an Historian, awakening, by lively strokes, the meditating powers of my mind, compels me frequently to desist awhile from the perusal of his work; and then it is that I shut the book, that I think with admiration upon some fine and favorite passage, that I employ a full half-hour in reflections, and that I return with fresh pleasure to the book which is the source of them.

A rational Reader requires that the narration should proceed rapidly, yet will not suffer the Historian to omit any thing which may render it extremely clear, and perfectly intelligible. The principal art, therefore, consists in preparing the Reader for the events intended to be submitted to his consideration. What can prove more fastidious than the method pursued by Mr. *Gibbon*, who, in his *eternal* History of the Roman Emperors, suspends,
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at every instant, his tedious and insipid narrative, to explain to you the causes of the occurrences the particulars concerning which you are on the point of reading ! No impediment should cross me during a recital ; and the author *must* be clear. This is the first law of all Historians. But, he must be clear with art, lest he discourage and check my attention ; and this second law is not less requisite than the first. I grow cold, I sink into languor, if you suffer me to lose sight of that goal to which it is your business to conduct me. My memory is only tolerable ; and, doubtless, it behoves you to assist and to refresh it, by calling up what, in the perusal of a long work, I may have forgotten, and what I actually want, at this moment, in order that I may be able to understand your meaning. If the Historian executes his task after the manner of Mr. *Gibbon*, I believe that, without *his* help, I shall remember what he has already told me, several times ; and, therefore, I shall reject his repetitions of intelligence with disdain. *Ars casum simulet* (observed Ovid, in a matter totally different from that concerning which

which we treat) and this dexterous management is not less necessary for the Historian than for the Lover. In this respect, as in all others, the ancient Historians are our Masters. I expatiated, yesterday, upon the propriety of introducing speeches; and, let me intreat you, when you next read Livy, to remark with what fortunate address and skill he draws from them the power to refresh and assist the memory of his Readers, and to keep alive and support their attention.

In a general History, the Writer must take notice of a nation from its infancy, and if the Historian be particularly attentive not to neglect the developement of its character, and of its manners, morals and politics, every occurrence which he brings forward will prove naturally prepared for by that which has preceded it, and will as naturally prepare for that which is to follow. Unless I am mistaken, the first Decad of Livy points out to me those prodigies of constancy, of perseverance, of patience, of courage, or rather of magnanimity, concerning which I am to read in the

third Decad. At the side of those great men who are to triumph over Hannibal, I shall not be surpris'd to find some insatiably avaricious generals who, availing themselves of the public calamities, increase their private fortunes at the expence of the People of Italy; for, Livy has presented me with a picture of those passions which troubled the infant Republic, subsequent to the death of Tarquin. They, indeed, conceal themselves; but, he has taken care to inform me that they occasion a secret fermentation in every heart; nor shall I be surpris'd at the monstrous excess to which avarice proceeds, when, stimulated by the spoils of Carthage, of Asia and of Macedonia, the riches of the whole world are insufficient to appease its cravings.

Explanations are particularly requisite in a general History, when a People the events concerning whom are to be related have engaged in war against a new enemy. Then the Historian ought to expatiate for the purpose of lighting me on my progress either more or less in proportion to the celebrity and power of

of the People, and to the ease with which they might expose their enemies to greater dangers than they themselves could possibly experience. How unfortunate is it that we have lost the second Decad of Livy ! What he would at first have observed concerning the kingdom of Pyrrhus, and the character of this Prince, before he should have touched upon the descent of his army into Italy, and next what he would have remarked with respect to the Carthaginians, prior to his relation of the first Punic war, must, doubtless, have proved exceedingly instructive. Freinshemius, although much inferior to Livy, the author whom he has chosen for his model, not having exhausted his powers, treats, in his supplement, concerning these two subjects in an elegant and precise manner. But, do you seek for a *perfect model* of the kind ? You will discover it in Thucydides. It is not possible to find a more explicit and intelligent description than that given by this Writer of the situation or the interests of the different People who inhabited Sicily in which the Athenians were rashly preparing to light up the flames of war.

In a particular History, the case is different. As in theatrical representations, much must be explained in order that I may acquire a knowledge of the anterior times by their influence upon the events of which the Writer is on the point of furnishing me with a detail. The Masters in the art of Poetry direct the Dramatic Poet to make this exposition as short as possible, and to hasten to the introduction of that action which is to affect and interest the passions of the audience. Equally binding is this law upon the Historian and the Poet; and it is founded on the nature of the human mind, eager after information, and glowing with impatience to reach the winding up of the event and plot which have been brought forward as the great objects of its attention. Explain only that which is indispensibly requisite to enable the Reader properly to understand your History; and so instruct him that he may not find himself embarrassed in his conceptions of your meaning, amidst the narrative of facts which you submit to his inspection. In proportion to the clearness and simplicity of your stile and mode of reasoning

soning and explaining, he will seize your ideas with facility, and call them up at once to his remembrance as often as he shall find it necessary to avail himself of their suggestions:

In all other respects (some parts which enter into his description of Cataline excepted) imitate Sallust. Having drawn the picture of this memorable conspirator, why does he ascend to the arrival of Æneas in Italy? Of little avail is it that Sallust runs over this space of several centuries with his habitual rapidity; for, even in despite of his natural brevity, he becomes tedious; because his remarks were not requisite either for his own compatriots and contemporaries, or for the enlightened readers of the present age. It would have proved sufficient to observe that Rome, aggrandized by her virtues, had conquered the whole world, but adopted from it all the vices which could not have associated with her ancient laws and with her ancient liberty. Better would it be to proceed, without ceremony, to the tenth chapter; a most admirable painting of the corrupted manners of the Romans!

I should expect all which possibly could result from the most monstrous and abominable turpitude of the heart, and yet consider with astonishment the projects of Cataline, and his irresistible influence and sway over each of his accomplices. I am prepared for all; and not foreseeing any thing, my curiosity, properly excited, will give support to my attention.

In his History of the Revolution under Gustavus Vasa, Abbé de Vertot runs through his exposition with all the brevity which we could wish for; yet does not forget the introduction of any point which appears requisite to furnish us with a clear idea of the several events. Therefore is it that his narrative flies on with an astonishing rapidity. Every circumstance becomes unravelled with the greatest ease; nor can I reflect upon the pleasure which I experience, without thinking myself particularly indebted to the Historian who does not suffer my mind to wander from the right track, and who has enabled me to perceive the chain which links the causes with their effects.

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Having offered to you a model *worthy of imitation*, let me put you upon your guard against the exposition of the History of Charles the Twelfth, by Voltaire. What useless remarks ! Remarks which no Writer who is not grossly ignorant would ever suffer to escape from him into public notice. Himself astonished at the information which he gives, he does not entertain a doubt but that the Reader will be pleased with him for his erudition. But, Voltaire will suffer nothing to be lost, and throws about, with lavish hands, the whole quantity of his knowledge. Yet, of what consequence is it when he tells me that Sweden has but two seasons ; the Winter and the Summer ? Where is the benefit which results to me from his vague accounts of the barbarous laws and savage manners of the ancient Swedes ? They had preserved an influence during the Revolution under Gustavus Vasa ; but they were not the points for discussion in the History of Charles the Twelfth. He might have limited himself to the observations that the crown, hereditary from Vasa, and continuing secure from the intervention

of any wise precautions taken by the Swedes to check the progress of arbitrary power, became despotic under the Father of Charles the Twelfth; and that this Prince, making an ill use of the divisions of his subjects, in order to disgrace and vilify them, was, notwithstanding, unable totally to stifle that elevation and that grandeur of the mind for which they stood indebted to the reign of Gustavus Adolphus. Instead of that insignificant description upon which Voltaire enters, you *must* perceive that he might have furnished his Readers with a most beautiful and interesting detail, if he had foreseen that it ought to have served as the explanation of the causes of events.

Unfortunately, Voltaire finished all his works before he found out what he actually meant to do; and what was the chief object of his literary and historical pursuits. Have you not been astonished that an Historian who forgets to lay before you the real situation of Sweden; and who, not foreseeing that the extraordinary character of his Hero must cause a Revolution in the manners and the government

ment of the Swedes, employs his attention upon the present moment, should, afterwards, on a sudden, carry his researches into a future moment; but, only to commit a fresh fault? In fact, instead of painting, in his exposition, the Czar, Peter the First, such as he as yet was when the war broke out, he represents him such as he appeared when disgraceful defeats (which, nevertheless, could not overwhelm him) had developed and thrown open all the resources of his genius. Hence, arises an embarrassment of which certain readers have not the least perception, but, which presses hard on those who are anxious rationally to account for different events. After so extremely faulty an exposition, it were wrong to expect from this Writer a reasonable History. His Hero would act without knowing for what cause; and the Historian would follow like a fool, in the track of a fool.

I must not forget to mention to you the exposition of Herodian which, reuniting every desirable quality, is presented to us in the most ingenious manner. Marcus Aurelius, arrived

at an extremely advanced age, and approaching
 to his end, opens a most affecting scene. I
 become a sharer in that lively inquietude which
 agitates the mind of this Prince, when he
 reflects that a boundless power is on the point
 of passing into the hands of an infant of fifteen
 or sixteen years of age. This virtuous Fa-
 ther calls to mind the excesses of Dionysius
 the Tyrant ; the outrages, the cruelties, and
 the frantic procedures of the successors of
 Alexander ; and then it is that I tremble for
 the fate of the Romans. My fear increases
 when, passing forwards to domestic examples,
 he presents to me the monstrous and ungo-
 vernable turpitude of Nero, the more recent
 cruelties of Domitian, and that patience of
 the Romans which, in some measure, even so-
 licits and makes its court to the vices of their
 Masters. I no longer entertain a doubt that
 Commodus will be corrupted both by his for-
 tune and by the public manners. I am melted
 into tenderness when I read the discourse
 - which the dying Marcus Aurelius addresses
 to those friends whom he appoints the guar-
 dians of the education of his son. “ *Let each*
“ of

“ of you (said the Emperor) *assist and serve*
 “ *him, as if you were his Father; and, fre-*
 “ *quently, repeat to him these last instructions to*
 “ *which he is now listening.*” Here is one of
 those strokes of genius which it is impossible
 too warmly to admire; and, in order to form
 a judgment of the calamities which the Empire
 is doomed to experience, whether from within,
 or from without, and of the causes which will
 produce them, I need only turn to the last mo-
 ments of Marcus Aurelius, the particular cir-
 cumstances attending which it is not in my
 power to forget. All the facts spring out of
 each other, and I anticipate the ruin of the
 Empire.

Yet, before we dismiss this subject, permit
 me to observe to you that the exposition of a
 particular History requires more circumstantial
 details, inasmuch as the People concerning
 whom you treat have a government, laws,
 manners, morals and a character, all influenc-
 ing in a greater degree the wide variety of
 events. But, is a nation no longer composed
 of citizens? Does it remain passive under the
 hand

hand which moves and governs it? Then, will it prove sufficient to discover the character, the manners, morals and abilities of this important personage.

CIDAMON.

I cannot avoid taking the liberty to interrupt you, and to tell you how much I am now charmed with your observations. I waited with impatience for the moment of your presenting me with these pictures which, in fact, the most illuminate the page of History, and are its greatest ornaments. I always meet them with pleasure.

EUGENIUS.

So much the better, Cidamon! for you. Our Historians will not leave you in want of these; and *their* imagination most wonderfully assists them. But, for my part, I must confess to you that I am more difficult to please; and that it is only under certain conditions that I can be induced to love these ornaments.

ments. When there appears upon the scene some man distinguished either by his virtues, his vices, or his talents; who changes the interests of his country; either imparts fresh vigor to the Constitution, or wounds it by injuries, take care to offer me a faithful picture of his whole proceedings. It were to neglect instructing me, to become indifferent either about leading me to that which is *good* or drawing me away from that which is *evil*, should you not paint to the life, an Aristides, a Themistocles, a Pericles, an Alcibiades, a Camillus, a Decius, a Fabricius, a Scipio, &c. Enter into all the details. Amongst *such* men, nothing puerile and insignificant can, possibly, be found. Even trifles with which *they* are connected assume an air of dignity and grandeur. But, let the Historian take care, lest he endeavour to rivet my attention upon some person who does not deserve the notice of any Reader of understanding. Shew me the pictures of those men who have occasioned Revolutions, and conducted the great enterprises of which they were the life and soul. Teach me how their manners, their morals

and

and their talents have changed the face of Empires and of Republics. I like to perceive in what manner events spring out of *their* characters; and I am pleased with the Historian who discovers in their passions and their talents the causes of those facts which I might, otherwise, consider as the work of fortune. Has a character proved even contemptible? yet, it will charm, it will attract me, provided that I see resulting from it some great effect. It is thus that our Historians might have made the most of Charles the Sixth of France, whose mad procedures, at one moment stupid, and at another moment furious, gave to the passions of the nation a fresh course, and destroyed old opinions to make room for new errors.

When he paints for me a great personage, let the Historian take care not to present me with an Hero who receives no tinge or bias from the age in which he lives, and who is free from any fault whatever. This would betray his ignorance of nature. The personal characters of all mankind are perpetually subordinate

dinate to the national characters, whether they intermingle from education, or whether it becomes necessary to strike in with it, in order that we may succeed in our projects. The passions are always the same; but either more or less constrained by laws, by morals, and by public manners, they present themselves in different ways and under different forms. Manlius Capitolinus had all the ambition of Marius. Yet, Livy would take particular care not to paint the first with the same colors which he has, doubtless, used for the picture of the second in that part of his work which is unfortunately lost. These delicate shades are the fruits of genius; and I like to discover in an extraordinary man the impression which he takes from nature, and the impression which he receives from circumstances. In Livy, Manlius conceals his ambition beneath the mask of those virtues which were the most calculated to please the Romans; and Marius, in a place already stained with the blood of his fellow-citizens, will govern like a tyrant, in a Republic as yet free, but ceasing to *deserve* freedom.

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No character was ever drawn with a more masterly pencil than that of Cataline, in Salust. We perceive a most extraordinary man, at once violently addicted to the infamous corruption of his times, and inspired with the ideas of the grandeur which Rome, even at this period, had preserved. I like to discover how, from the very bosom of debauchery, and with the aid of miscreants whom he renders worthy to become his accomplices, he dares to engage in a conspiracy by which the detectors of it were so exceedingly intimidated. All this piece of History is a *chef d'œuvre* in the art of drawing characters. Cataline proceeds with that confidence which is imparted to him by his own audacity, and his experience of the vices of the Romans. Cicero scarcely dares to rely upon the laws, and is convinced of their imbecility, even in the moment that he occasions them to triumph, for the last time. Cato, who, during an age like ours, would have buried his virtue in retirement, becomes indebted to the Philosophy of the Stoics for a virtue which is no longer known at Rome. Attending solely to justice, and to the safety of
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the Republic, he still argues in the Senate as if he were addressing himself, as formerly, to a Fabricius or a Regulus; whilst Cæsar, uniting with *some* virtues an ambition more unlimited and inordinate than that of Cataline, regards the troubles, the confusion and the vices of the Romans as the basis of the tyranny which he meditates, and prepares to exercise against them. When we draw characters, let us keep at a most cautious distance from the marvellous. It was not without reason, Cidamon! that, yesterday, I advised the Historian to enter upon a serious study of the passions. Without this assistance, how is it possible for us to discern what we owe to Nature and what we owe to Fortune? Nature, in general, scatters about her gifts as if she left them to alight where chance might carry them. With a liberal hand, she lavishes, on multitudes, those half-virtues, those half-vices and those half-talents which dispose us to wear all characters we may be wanted to assume, or rather to have no characters at all. When she feels an inclination to treat some of us more favorably than others, and to form such

men

men as do honor to humanity, she gives them a ruling passion, and, at the same time, an understanding and a genius sufficiently prompt, fertile and just to assist it, and to prepare and bring forward those successes of which it has occasion to preserve itself, to increase its powers and to gather strength and permanence. Hitherto, the work of Nature is but the first draught, and it is the circumstances and the events that surround us, that strike and interest us which either awaken and accelerate, or retard the progress of our character; which either sink it into languor, or impart to it fresh vigor. Fortune puts the finishing stroke to the work.

The characters of the most extraordinary men have (if I may be allowed the expression) their infancy, their youth, their manhood and their old age; and it is in not confounding these different ages, but, in distinguishing what Nature and Fortune have brought about, either separately or in concert, that the great art and dexterity of an Historian consists. It is to this discernment that Tacitus stands indebted

debted to the secret charm which attracts and binds me to the perusal of his work. In his picture of Tiberius, he shews me the ambition of Cæsar who will not rest contented with any acquisition short of absolute command. But, this ambition is circumspect and timid, because it took root under a suspicious prince, himself full of apprehensions, jealous, and even more disposed than was the Republic to bend under the influence of fear. I perceive with pleasure that Tiberius, fettered by habit, dares not shew his ambition to a Senate which trembles at his feet. He sits upon the Throne with the feelings of a Slave. Hence, that Tyranny which he labours to conceal; a species of dissimulation which he would not have carried into practice, if he had reigned within a country accustomed to monarchy. His jealousy of power (always increased, troubled and perplexed by the obstacles which his imagination throws before him) and his timidity follow him to Capræa. Nor is he, there, actually voluptuous. He strives only to administer consolation to his mind,

mind, or to deceive his ambition by insipid pleasures.

Thus, does an able Painter of the passions represent a character, and not by confounding and blending every varying particular into one common mass, like Sarrazin, in the picture which he has given us of Valsein. Our modern Historians would not heap upon one another these *fine* antitheses which they search after with such an eager curiosity, if they had studied what men owe to Nature, who has but one equal and constant step; and to circumstances which continually change and oblige the passions to borrow a different form, in order to attain to the same end. All these fantastical portraits placed at the head of a work are supremely ridiculous; and, at length, the Historian, rather than not maintain his first positions, falls into a thousand absurdities. Be this as it may, I cannot avoid commending Sarrazin for having abandoned his History almost as soon as he began it; and, indeed, he would have felt himself prodigiously puzzled to have thrown his Hero into his proper line
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of action. When you bring some great man forward upon the public scene, confine yourself to the mention of those virtues only which he has displayed up to that period. This is a rule which the great Historians have fixed on for their adoption; and, in fact, what would you think of Sallust, if, drawing the picture of Marius, at the æra of the Jugurthan war, he had represented as naturally interwoven with his character all those borrowed vices which the circumstances of the times compelled him to adopt? If you please, at the close of your History, assist me to finish the faithful portrait of some great man. Shew me that predominant quality which has never deserted him, but which, like a Proteus, has assumed a variety of different shapes. I should then gather salutary instruction from your writings; I should learn to know those men who are immediately before my eyes; I should learn to know *myself*, and to distrust the fragility of human virtues.

I cannot avoid illustrating my observations by an example; and that I may trouble you
with

with a model of the most ridiculous and faulty
 representation which I ever met with, permit
 me to shew you in what manner Father de
 Cerceau mangles and blots the character of
 the celebrated Rienzi. He tell us that "this
 " man sprang from the dregs of the People;
 " but that he studied to excellent purposes;
 " and that, having as much understanding as
 " elocution in his idéas, he became extremely
 " accomplished, acquired the reputation of
 " an extraordinary man and deserved the esteem
 " and friendship of Petrarch. He was elo-
 " quent" (says the Historian) " He studied
 " Antiquity and compared it with his own
 " times; and from thence he drew reflections
 " by which he regulated the whole plan of
 " his conduct. He is engaged in ruminating
 " upon Cicero, Valerius Maximus, Livy,
 " Seneca, and, more particularly, the Com-
 " mentaries of Julius Cæsar. He is grace-
 " fully shaped and noble in his air." To
 what can all this lead? To the absurdity of
 telling us the most incredible stories: " that
 " he had a singular mixture of virtues and
 " of vices, of fine qualities and defects, of
 " talents

“ talents and of incapacity, which seemed to
 “ contradict each other and which he, not-
 “ withstanding, united together in a most
 “ extraordinary degree.” After all this, can
 you form an idea of the great understanding
 of Rienzi, of his elevation of mind and of
 his excellent studies? From hence, De Cer-
 ceau gallops with a loose rein into antithesis
 and absurdity. His Hero “is refined and unpo-
 “ lished, knavish and simple, stern and pli-
 “ ant, prudent and venturesome. One might
 “ conceive him” (adds this author) “ to be a
 “ profound politician and a fool. Capable of
 “ entering upon the most rash enterprizes, a
 “ timidity hung about his nature which
 “ would not suffer him to carry them into
 “ decisive action. With too little judgment
 “ to give himself the least trouble about ob-
 “ stacles, and with too much cowardice to
 “ turn against them and pursue them. His
 “ courage bordered upon a daring intrep-
 “ dity, and incontinently became weakness.”
 What absurdities! But this is not all. He
 informs us “ that the fraud and artifice of
 “ Rienzi was founded upon simplicity itself,
 “ and

“and that even his hypocrisy had its source
 “in a particular kind of simplicity. He was
 “so ambitious as to have conceived the design
 “of forming some sort of universal monarchy; foolish even to extravagance” (these
 are his words: I well remember them) “and
 “so sensible that he ran even into the refinements of wisdom.”

THEODOSIUS.

It is impossible to listen to this instance of the justice of your observation without laughing. This is, indeed, a master stroke in the art of writing absurdities. But, I fancy that, after having once read it, you felt no inclination to turn over even to the next page.

EUGENIUS.

I beg your pardon. I had the curiosity to observe how the Historian would draw himself out of this scrape. I was astonished to find a man of merit, concerning whom his Biographer was egregiously mistaken; a person

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extremely superior to his contemporaries, and who, in a more fortunate age, would have attained to great achievements. Most forcibly impressed with the idea of the difference which he discovered between the government of the ancient Romans and the government of the Popes, then driven into exile from their Capital, where they knew not how to reign, he glows with indignation whilst he perceives how much his country is humiliated, and becomes anxious to avenge its cause. Yet, destitute of any hope of succor (except from a People who were no better than a mean and abject mob, oppressed by the Barons) and without the power to act either as a Prince, or as a great Lord, he is obliged to sound their minds, their tempers and their inclinations with the most measured circumspection, to explain himself in an hieroglyphical manner, and, before he makes the least attempt at the establishment of liberty, to discover whether the multitude desire to enjoy it, and whether they deserve to have a Tribune. I grant that all the means of which Rienzi endeavours to avail himself are of a most extraordinary kind ;

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yet,

yet, considered under their relation to the point from whence he set out, and to the end which he proposed to reach, they are extremely wise and extremely prudent. This Tribune of the modern Rome who, doubtless, would have acted a distinguished part in ancient Rome, committed but one fault; yet, this fault, capital in its nature, of course, ruined his projects and his hopes. The ambition of Rienzi in arming himself to assume the rank and character of a Knight appears to me but as the ambition of a Tradesman. Eager to make himself a Gentleman, he does not perceive how much he degrades his quality of Tribune which raised him above the Nobility. One unguarded moment, one weak and inconsiderate action becomes his ruin. He can no longer succeed, because he is despised by the Nobility who adopt him, and hated by the People from whom he separates himself. Hence, his impotent endeavors to reanimate an authority at its last gasp; and hence, the means, all novel in their nature, which he employed to re-establish himself, but which no longer either inspired the same confidence

fidence or occasioned the same fears. These remarks are sufficient concerning a piece of History which required and merited the pen of a Sallust; but which was unfortunately disfigured by a barely tolerable Poet, who was fired with the ambition of placing himself the last in the list of execrable Historians.

To judge correctly and with discernment of those personages who have appeared upon the great Theatre of the World, let the Historian study and unravel (if I may use the expression) the passions which form the principal part of their character. Let him compare their different actions with each other. Follow, observe and examine into the nature of your Hero, amidst the various circumstances wherein he may be placed. Although altered by different accidents, and even disguised under new forms, does the same passion continually shew itself? You are far advanced when you have found out the principle which is the spring of action in the man whose character you are drawing. By reflecting upon *this*, you will even discover of what mo-

difications the predominant principle is susceptible, whether from the difference of conjunctures, or from the difference of the subaltern passions with which it enters into association. When I observe the point of elevation to which Sylla had attained, I am inclined to ascribe to him a most unlimited ambition; yet, I shall discover in him nothing more than the common ambition of a Citizen when I have once reflected that he was forced to make himself Master of the World, in order to resist Marius who would have destroyed him; that he abdicated the dictatorship, and did not linger in it to be assassinated. The ambition of Marius was, indeed, boundless. Successes increased and disgraces irritated it; no strokes of fortune, howsoever prosperous, were equal to the gratification of his insatiable disposition; and even the most odious means were lawful in *his* sight, provided that they proved serviceable to his views. Let the Historian beware of thinking that the ruling passion (ambition, for instance) proceeds always in the same track. The ambition of Cæsar and the ambition of Pompey are not similar. The one
plots

plots the ruin of the Republic. He does not chuse that the Dictatorship should reach him as a benefaction from fellow-citizens whom he despises. He *will* earn it as a right of conquest, at Pharsalia. The other, educated and formed under the party of Sylla, desires that the Romans, incapable of being their own Governors, should yield to him, in the character of suppliants, the sovereign power. To strip himself of the habits of his first years, he finds it necessary that the ambition of Cæsar should exalt his own by giving it more activity; and his anger would have rendered his tyranny as merciless and unrelenting as that of Cæsar should have been mild and properly attempered.

Let the Historian take care lest he pronounce too hastily upon the character of the man who is the subject of his remarks. If he strives to form a judgment of him from the investigation of his first actions, he runs the risque of being much mistaken. Richelieu and Mazarin, so different from each other in the whole course of their lives, raised them-

selves into their fortunate situations by the same means ; and, in their low and cunning intrigues, I, at the first, can only discover the same ambition. But, let us wait a little. Circumstances will shortly unravel and bring forward, into their fullest points of view, the subaltern passions which hire themselves, as it were, to the ruling passion, and impart to it such a variety of different colors. The ambition of Mazarin (I should observe to myself) could only have been timid, subtle, suspicious and patient, because, in the same manner that he intrigued to seize upon the absolute authority of the King, does he still intrigue to manage and conduct it. It appears to me that Richelieu felt himself reduced to the necessity of lowering himself, for once, by recurring to intrigue, and that he consoled himself for this humiliation with the hopes that it might be followed by success. Unrelenting, high-spirited and imperious, from the moment that he dared venture to become imperious, he gains the ascendancy over Louis the Thirteenth, for the purpose of making the Courtiers tremble, and keeping their disposition for

intrigue

intrigue in terror and subjection. You would be apt to say that he was inclined to revenge upon himself his first acts of meanness, and to repair them. It is more by the force of his character, than by the enlightened qualities of his mind, and the wisdom of his projects, that he astonishes his enemies, and proves successful.

At the head of States and Affairs, we perceive only false virtues, and, if I may use the expression, false vices. By what means shall I acquire the power to unravel them, unless Time, at length, arriving to my assistance, discovers to me these great Personages in different points of view and different circumstances? Whilst the multitude, for ever prone to infatuation, imagine that they perceive a lively pattern of disinterestedness, of generosity and of a sincere attachment to the public welfare, I suspend my judgment. I have my doubts whether *that* virtue be well grounded of which the leading object is to strike us with astonishment. I know that a ruling passion is capable of making great sacrifices, and that, in the happiest times, it conceives a hope of

indemnifying those passions from which it has received assistance and obedience. But, this subject would draw us into endless investigations ; and, therefore, Theodosius ! let us relinquish it, and proceed to take notice of *Order*, without an adherence to which no Historian can ever expect to enjoy even a tolerable share of literary reputation.

Order is, of all points whatsoever, the most necessary to the composition of a Work : nor need we produce a stronger proof of the justice of this assertion than that heap of books which, though filled with excellent things, afford not the least instruction, because they tire and disgust the generality of readers. *This* we have all experienced. A truth appears doubtful, unless it is prepared for by *that* truth which has preceded it ; and a beauty displaced becomes a defect ; but, *properly* arranged, grows more estimable.

*Ordinis hæc virtus erit et Venus, aut ego fallor,
Ut jam nunc dicat jam nunc debentia dici ;
Pluraque differat, et præsens in tempus omitlat.*

If

If *that* of which you have just informed me explains to me, before-hand, *what* you are going to relate, the attention of my mind will not meet with any interruption, and I shall eagerly run through the perusal of a work which draws me on with pleasure from the first page to the last. But, I know not whether an Historian would not experience more difficulty than any other kind of Writer, amidst his endeavours to find out this *Order* concerning which we are now speaking. The Historian bends under the prodigious weight of his materials; and, if he cannot so arrange them as to form out of the whole one regular edifice, I shall lose myself in a labyrinth from whence no path is open to favor my escape. All this I have felt during the perusal of the History of the Stuarts by Mr. Hume. Instead of what was promised to me, I have found nothing except memoirs which might have served for the materials of his History; and how could I possibly regard with approbation a work which the Historian, whether from an ignorance of his art, or from indolence, or from a dullness of comprehension, has only

sketched? All these facts, unripped from each other, elude my recollection; I have wasted my time, and cannot form a proper judgment concerning those events of which the narrative is placed before me.

In vain would you flatter yourself that you enjoy the power of establishing this luminous order throughout the pages of your History, if you have not separately meditated upon each of its respective parts. Draw them near to each other, in order that you may perceive wherein consists their most natural relation. Aided by your preliminary studies, endeavour so to place them that they may reciprocally throw light, the one upon the other. In a word, follow the precept of Horace. Make yourself master of your subject.

..... *Cui lecta potenter erit res,*

Nec facundia deseret hunc, nec lucidus ordo.

This Order, in a great measure, consists in the exposition relative to which I have so lately troubled you with my remarks. When

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the Historian has once acquired an extremely clear idea of all those points which he proposes to investigate, he will not find it difficult (I should imagine) to throw aside the mention of facts almost barren in their nature, or foreign to his purpose, and to bring his readers acquainted with the influence which the several events maintain, the one upon the other. Remark, let me intreat you, that there are in all States, in all enterprizes, and in all affairs, one or more principal points which decide upon the success of the whole, and which draw after them all particular accidents, like a torrent. In the government, or the administration of a Society, it is the knowledge of these decisive points which form the accomplished Statesman; nor must he promise himself success but in proportion to the steadiness and perseverance with which he strongly attaches himself to them, and keeps them always in his view. So is it with the Historian. On these objects should he fix both *his* attention and my own. Then, with the greatest facility, will he discover the most luminous order. Every point becomes clear

clear and simple. The several facts will remain deeply engraven upon my memory, because I shall not, at any time, lose sight of that chain which, like the thread of Ariadne, will serve as a clue, to prevent my reason from wandering out of the right track. Such is the admirable art of Livy from the commencement of his History to the end; and (to remind you only of one example) recollect how, in his third Decad, when he is under the necessity of presenting to us, all at one time, a vast croud of objects, he rivets our regard and attention upon Hannibal, whose genius holds in the balance the fortune of the Romans, and even occasions it to totter. Whatsoever happens out of Italy relates only to this General of the Carthaginians. Rome, by making diversions, is employed only in endeavors to diminish the forces of Hannibal, and to prevent Carthage from repairing those losses which are caused even by her victories.

When a State is either so happy, or so wise as to have acquired a *proper* knowledge of its own strength, to have learned the art of managing

naging it to advantage, and of not venturing upon too many enterprizes at one time, the Historian will find himself more at ease; and, for the purpose of putting his relation into great order, he need only follow, with fidelity, the order of events. But, if *this* State, whether from an ignorance of its real interests, or from a kind of fatality, plunges, at once, into a variety of undertakings, without making the *proper* distinction between *that* which ought to have the principal lead and those which should be considered merely as simple accessaries, I should fear that the Historian would find himself entangled amidst equal perplexities and as little able to acquit himself with credit as the Republic the History of which he is composing. Whilst the persons in administration know not either what they do, or what they want to do, you will perceive that the Historian, not more enlightened than themselves, will string one event upon another, and fatigue and disgust the Reader by narratives which do not lead to any serviceable point whatever. Even the Author, tired out amidst his labors to arrange materials so meagre

meagre and so forbidding, will only throw before you a set of wretched pictures of which the first glance is too discouraging to make us wish to look a second time. Without a principal view before him, he will, at one moment, injudiciously relinquish the subject concerning which he treats ; at another moment, he will resume it with equal impropriety ; and, after all this, he will, a second time, discard it upon as frivolous and indefensible a ground. He will cut up occurrences, fritter them into pieces, and, of course, never bring them forward in their just proportions.

What resources then are left for the Historian ? Those which must arise from his possession of greater mental power than the Heroes whom he strives to celebrate. When he discovers the embarrassments into which he has been thrown by *their* perplexing and ill-digested politics, let him prove superior to all endeavors to conceal ; and candidly acknowledge to the Reader the nature of his situation. When I am once desired to have *patience*, my *impatience* appears to be diminished. By deep,
but

but always short, reflections, let him inform me of the faults either of the Senate or of the Generals; let him rise above these; I shall follow him, and, during a fastidious relation, I shall be comforted and supported by the pleasure of thinking myself superior to those men of whom I read the History; and *their* faults, conveying light and instruction into my mind, will indemnify me for what fatigue I may experience in the perusal of the work. Yet, in the very midst of this confusion, the Historian must not forget to establish for himself a kind of *Order*. *One* must naturally present itself to every Writer; and this is to turn his chief attachment to the principal object; to form out of it the centre of the picture, and to place those personages who are of less importance round the border. Readers whose confined taste and understanding can *not* prevent them from remaining satisfied with a *moderately well-written* History will find no fault whatever; but readers of a superior cast will expect a more enlarged and decisive specimen of talents, ingenuity and abilities. When these unpleasing subjects are unavoidably brought

brought forward, I seem to wish that the Historian would inform me by what accident or what chance I may reach, without entertaining a single doubt as to the result, the point which is to unravel the whole business. Since Imprudence then leaves intirely open a free career to Fortune, I could wish that the latter might act her part even to the full extent. I should like to discover how, by exhausting their resources, States detach themselves from their hopes, and, at length, renounce enterprizes of which the good and ill fortune, slowly succeeding to each other, are, in the balance, of an equal weight.

Independently of this *general Order*, which ought to constitute the very soul of an instructive and interesting History, there is a *particular Order* which points out to me the place wherein the different matters should be separately arranged. For example, Abbé du Bos, in his History of the League of Cambray, reserves for his last book an Essay on that commerce to which the Venetians owed the riches they stood in need of to enable them

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to defray the expences of a war against so great a multitude of confederated enemies. It is evident that this preparatory detail should have been placed at the beginning of the work. When the Historian explains to me in what manner Venice could have proved equal to the maintenance of this war, I cease to feel the least curiosity, provided that I am only one of those Readers who do not like to give themselves the least trouble to discover the causes of events. I am concerned at interruptions to that impatience with which I should have hastened to the point where the Historian means to unravel and to wind up the whole circumstances of his narration; and, in disgust, I shut the book. If I am amongst the number of the most intelligent Readers, I execrate, in terms extremely far from being gentle, an Historian so ignorant of his art that he can only offer me the information which comes too late.

I have not perused the History of America written by Dr. Robertson; but, if the extract put into my hands was a faithful transcript
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from the original, I cannot avoid thinking that this work, replete with curious and even excellent matter, must not, however, be proposed as a model for unexceptionable historical writing. Why, let me ask you, does he waste all the first book in expatiating on the the navigation of the Ancients, their commerce and their geographical discoveries? All this part of his publication may have been put together with great learning, fidelity and precision. But, this is not what I want. I wish to know the nature of the reasons for imagining that a new world existed. I am anxious to become acquainted with the character of Christopher Columbus, and those uncommon and great qualities that enabled him to execute the prodigious enterprize which he had meditated. I am told that all the second book is set apart for the satisfaction of this curiosity, but those parts of it which have been described to me entitle me to ask whether Livy would not have treated the subject with more conciseness? Would *he* have suffered such a consumption of his time as must have gone to the trouble of explaining to me a thousand things which it

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is, indeed, serviceable to know, but, concerning which I feel an absolute indifference, during my impatience to discover how the Europeans reduced to subjection an extensive country that brought us to a state of poverty by pouring in upon us immense quantities of gold and silver, of which the possession sowed the seeds of fresh wars, quarrels and dissensions.

The third book contains the History of the discovery and conquest of the islands, and the narrative of some attempts upon the Continent. They tell me that, in the following book, the Author treats concerning the mode of life amongst the Savages, compares it to a state of civilization, and then begins to make mention of the manners of the Americans. I believe that all these different pieces are worthy of the greatest Philosopher; but I am always apprehensive lest an eager desire to make a parade of Philosophy and of literary knowledge should prove a detriment to History, which ought to move forward without ostentation, to reject all which is not necessary, and to wear only those ornaments which are suitable to its nature. Do you not perceive that,

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on this occasion, all *Order* is overthrown? Had the Historian placed the fourth book before the third, I think that I should have read, with more pleasure and with more interested feelings, the narration of the exploits of Columbus and the Spaniards. It is true that, in such a case, Doctor Robertson would have refrained from a multitude of remarks which, at *this* moment, I should not wish to meet with; but, he would have entered into an excellent exposition, of which I, certainly, was desirous.

It is in his exposition that an Historian ought to manifest all that art which a great Dramatic Poet employs in order that he may prepare me properly to listen to either his tragedy or his comedy. Does a Writer sacrifice every consideration to the pleasure which he feels in setting down, for the amusement of his reader, a variety of *fine things*? A judicious critic, without incurring the charge of severity, will laugh them to scorn; and, for *this*, he shall have reason on his side. It is not possible that, even at the commencement of his work,

an Historian can make too much haste to proceed to the fact; for, the mind is impatient, and has not yet the least occasion to repose itself.

The same disorder (as I am informed) prevails all through this work. The author devotes the first Book to the conquest of Mexico, and the sixth to the conquest of Peru; then, travelling back his former ground, he, in the seventh Book, entertains us with remarks touching the state of civilization at which the two Kingdoms had arrived. Must it not have proved infinitely more suitable to the great plan of the Historian if, having brought Columbus into Mexico, he had informed the Reader that this Captain would no longer find himself contending against a set of untutored, lazy, enervated and timid Savages, like those inhabiting Saint Domingo, and the other islands; but, against a civilized People who had established for themselves a regular form of government, and who would have resisted the Spaniards and their courage inflamed with avarice, if, not being confounded by the novelty

welty of the spectacle and the dangers which threatned them, they could have risen superior to that astonishment and those terrors which freeze up the mind, and of which the People of the ancient World have frequently become the victims. I must repeat, Theodosius ! that the Author, by following the *Order* to which I adverted, would feel himself reduced to the necessity of relinquishing a great part of his arguments, and of his reflections : and, so to employ the remainder that his narrative, continually clear, should not prove overburthened and slackened in its progress, might have become a task attended with a great deal of trouble. But, this is not my business, and, as Boileau boasted of having learned Racine to make verses *with difficulty*, so I should not feel the least concern at being reproached for having taught Historians to write, *with equal difficulty*, their Histories. It is scarcely possible too often to apprize them of the necessity of embracing all opportunities to collect together facts and to follow them with suitable reflections ; but it is a point of still greater importance to bring home to their conviction that
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they ought not to make use of *all* their riches, and (if you will allow me the expression) that the clippings of every work, and more especially of a good History, ought to be more considerable than the Work itself.

THEODOSIUS.

You have not been imposed upon in the account given to you of the History written by Doctor Robertson. I read it, for the first time, with the greatest avidity. Again, I began to read it; but, I must confess to you, that this second perusal, far from affording me the pleasure which I expected, was cold and languid. I quitted the Book without regret; and I recurred to it without impatience; a change of disposition for the causes of which your remarks have properly accounted. In whatsoever manner a History may be put together, I perceive that it can, at *first* reading, entertain us and secure our attention when it describes events equally novel and important. We then, in some measure, confound the merit of the Historian with that of his

his Hero ; but, at the *second* perusal, all this chaos is dispersed ; we can clearly sit in judgment upon the Historian and his art ; and those occurrences of which the relation is no longer new, nor even well-told, come to us in a tedious form ; and, upon this account, the Book is banished into some corner of the library, where it is no longer read, and only now and then consulted.

At present, whilst I begin to form more accurate ideas of the duties of an Historian, I could venture to offer to your consideration several remarks upon this History of America, by Doctor Robertson. Failing, in the same moment, to take in the whole compass of his subject, and to examine it as a Politician, he fills the mind with hopes which terminate in disappointment ; he announces to me that the discovery of America is an event of all others the most fortunate to mankind ; yet, as I proceed in the perusal of the Work, I find that the Geographers are, upon this occasion, the only gainers. The *new* World, vanquished and laid waste, has no better laws to enforce

enforce its obedience than those of Montezuma and the Caciques; whilst *our* World obtains only unserviceable riches, and all the vices which naturally must have resulted from the acquisition. But, let me, now, check *my* remarks; and ask pardon for having interrupted *your's*. Return, if you please, to that investigation concerning *Order* with which you had begun to entertain and to instruct us.

EUGENIUS.

I shall obey your commands. This *Order* which you so much approve of is the rock whereon the greater number of Historians have been dashed away. We might venture to assert that some Writers (so negligent do they prove, in this respect) have never attended to the important truth that out of this *Order* arises that magic, that secret charm which embellishes even beauties, and attracts and insensibly keeps alive the attention of the Readers. Other Historians, remaining under the dominion of an imagination which does injury to their judgment, look no farther than

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the part concerning which they are writing, and, without considering either what precedes or ought to follow it, remain satisfied if they can throw before us a brilliant and lengthened cluster of words, and conceive that upon this alone depends the whole perfection of a Work. But, let us content ourselves with some remarks relating to the art of writing History.

Although Chronology (that *is*, the order of the times) should always meet with due attention, yet, the Historian must *not* follow it with undeviating servility. When you have entered upon the relation of an important fact, take care lest by hacking and cutting one part from the other, you degrade its consequence; and do not abandon it in the very moment when you have excited my curiosity. This rule is the more unerring, because the greatest Historians, such as Tacitus and Gro-tius, have submitted to it even in their annals; a mode of writing History which being (as we have already agreed) extremely proper to give us an idea of the formation of the laws, manners and customs of a People, either du-
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ring their early infancy, or throughout the course of an important Revolution, lays it down, as an indispensable point, that the narratives of facts should be arranged and brought forward in conformity to the order of their respective dates. Yet, these two Historians, endued with great knowledge of the World, and sensible that they must please and attract, if they intended to succeed in their desire to instruct their Readers, have, upon some occasions, anticipated the times; and *then*, they regarded it as sufficient to take notice of this unusual deviation. Tacitus once forgets himself in the third Book of his History, where, sensibly affected by the violent troubles in Germany, which nearly ruined the affairs of the Romans on that frontier, he just alludes to them, and then promises to make them soon the object of his discussion. Unless I am much mistaken in my opinion, the Historian betrays a want of skill when, having announced to me important facts, he does not immediately relate them. On such occasions, the impatient mind of the Reader divides its attention, is pushed forward from its mark, and,

being drawn aside from that subject which was under its consideration, of course, suffers it to escape from notice.

It has been observed that the art of running into transitions is, of all others, the most difficult for the Historian to practice with success; and, indeed, the greater part of our Histories afford a melancholy proof that these transitions are either puerile, insipid, flat, harshly worked up, or unnaturally forced. But, I believe that I have already remarked that so disgusting a defect arises from the precipitation with which an Historian begins his work, before he has seriously meditated upon all its different parts, and *that* place in which he should arrange them. Granting that I should not have discovered the most natural connection of events, it will, necessarily, follow that, in order to tack them to each other, I must employ two or three awkward expressions, or that in this passage, too violently unhinged by sudden jerks of sentences, the attention of my reader may be precipitately thrown into a new subject. On the contrary,
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I follow, without the least embarrassment, in the track of an Historian who is the friend of *Order*. A single word will prove sufficient to lead him properly to his transition; and even *this* word will, frequently, become needless, provided that his narration is rapid, and his style skilfully compacted.

If you fall under the obligation of interrupting your recital, for the indispensibly requisite purpose of elucidating some particular point, rest assured that you have neglected that order to which it was your duty strictly to adhere. Proceed over your ground a second time; and observe whether some essential matter has not been wanting in your exposition. Perhaps, even one word, fortunately placed only two or three pages higher, would have sufficed for the information of your Reader. Be this as it may, labour; exercise your thoughts until you find out the secret of either dispensing with this elucidation or of rendering it agreeable. On these occasions, judicious and expert Historians either introduce a speech to animate the narrative; or instruct

their Readers by painting the public disorders, troubles and alarms. In short, better than *such* defaulters, should I like those untutored Historians who, in *their* simple way, insert as marginal notes what they have not the art to interweave within the body of the Work.

In my opinion, the History of the Council of Trent, written by Fra-Paolo, is, with respect to *Order*, a model which we cannot either study or imitate too much. This *particular* History is, in some degree, the *general* History of Europe, during the time when it was barbarously torn in pieces by the envenomed quarrels of the Theologians, the blind fanaticism of the People, and the misguided ambition of the Princes and of the Great. Under these fatal circumstances, it was imagined that a general Council, by working up a coincidence of opinions, might assuage hatred, enlighten error and restore dignity to Religion. Never did the exposition of any particular History embrace, at one time, a greater variety of different objects; and soon we shall perceive that Fra-Paolo introduces,
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upon the same theatre, a croud of personages, all distinguished by their importance; but whose interests, views and conduct are indispensibly opposed to each other. Whilst *some* of the Princes most earnestly insist that the Fathers of the Council shall explain themselves, and impress truths, with full conviction, upon the mind, others who do not feel, like *them*, the influence of Religion, but, who distrust (if I may use the expression) the decisions of the Holy Ghost, and fear lest it should act in opposition to their interests, countenance and uphold the crooked politics of the Court of Rome, more jealous (according to the opinion of Fra-Paolo) of its power than of its sacred trusts and codes of faith; and, at this period, represented as obstinately determined not to reform the abuses of the Clergy. Yet, it is necessary to lay open the intrigues of the Legates and the servitude of the Bishops resident beyond the Alps; to put harangues into the mouths of the Theologians whose scholastic oratory confounds the ears, and even scares the understanding; to paint the obstinate perseverance of the Innovators; and to

give some idea of those fatal wars which continue to rage, and of which the successes are never points of little consequence to the politics of the Court of Rome, or indifferent to the States who either desire or fear the decisions of the Council.

I am aware that Fra-Paolo is suspected by the professors of our Religion. They observe that he was not the enemy of the Innovators. *This* may have been the case; and, indeed, several great men of that æra have suffered reproaches upon the same account. I consider this Historian only in his relation to the art with which he arranges and disposes the different occurrences which he submits to our perusal. Observe with what simplicity all this chaos is dispersed, by what natural transitions the Historian passes from one subject to another, hanging heavily upon none, yet presenting me with all the elucidations of which I stand in need, and, at length, conducting me to a developement for which I am prepared.

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I think I can discover in the smile from Cidamon that he is disposed to sport a few pleasantries upon the Theologians ; and, indeed, a raillery of this kind seems a necessary ingredient in the composition of a Philosopher of the present age. But the graver countenance of Theodosius insinuates to me that the Historians are the best company. I, therefore, proceed by remarking that the Historian, in order to instruct and please his Readers, must not neglect to avail himself of every thing which can intitle him to their confidence. We experience the good effect of this almost daily. Do not the same incidents, when related to us by a person of whose judgment and probity we have conceived a favorable opinion, affect us differently from the manner in which they touch our minds when reaching us in the narrative of a man either warped by some passion, or incapable of forming a proper judgment concerning that which passes immediately under his own eyes ? An Historian who, by his studies, shall have rendered himself worthy to write History, must, doubtless, merit the esteem and the friendship of his Readers. His en-

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lightened understanding will prepossess us in
 his favor. He will teach us to discover within
 ourselves those noble sentiments, that grandeur
 of the mind and that love of liberty which a
 bad education and the manners of our age
 may have suppressed, but which are so natural
 and so true that we again discover the seeds of
 them in our breasts, when some discerning and
 expert Historian has reached and fully exer-
 cised the power of interesting our hearts.
 What can you possibly expect from that Writer
 who, becoming the hired literary servant of a
 bookseller, and receiving wages from his hands,
 either explains away or disguises truths that
 he may not give umbrage to any person, and
 that he may deserve a pension? How can such
 an Historian attain to those qualities which
 are required by Lucian? *Let him* (remarks
 this Writer) *retain the freedom of his mind; let*
him not stand in awe of any man; let him rise
above all hope; let him prefer truth even to his
friends; let him endeavour to please Posterity more
than his contemporaries; let him scorn to descend
to any remarks which discover either adulation or
servility; let him prove superior to the prejudices
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of any government whatsoever ; and let him avoid discovering that he is, either in principle or sentiment, exclusively the native of any Country, or the professor of any Religion.

It is our love of truth which must enable us to advance a claim to general confidence. But, who can suppose that the Historian offers a becoming sacrifice to this truth, when he conceives a predilection for persons who do not appear worthy of his admiration? An infatuated prepossession always points out the existence of a false bias upon the mind of an Historian, and becomes rather a detriment than a service to the Hero in whose favor it was conceived. Never praise except with great moderation, lest you degrade the person whom you endeavour to exalt. In my opinion, Strada is insupportable ; for, so outrageously does he lavish his encomium on Alexander Farnese that he almost induces me to call in question his integrity and his talents. Why did he compare him to Cæsar, to Scipio, and to Alexander? The language of a Panegyrist debases History. In his relation of the siege
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of Dunkirk, Sarrazin appears equally inexperienced; and I am persuaded that the great Condé laughed at the absurdity of his flatterer. We might censure with less danger, because human malignity is, in *this* respect, *sufficiently* indulgent; and the Critic, on this occasion, puts on an air of dignity and independence. Yet, Tacitus has been blamed for probing to the bottom of the heart for secret vices, and for giving a criminal color to the actions of the personages who are the subject of his animadversions. He does *this* often; but, can we, therefore, suppose him in the wrong? When he wrote the History of the most corrupted age; when all virtues and all vices were covered with a mask, would he not have been considered as a dupe if he had given credit to those vain appearances by which the persons who assumed them endeavoured to deceive the multitude. Our modern Historians must very often have stood in need of the wise precaution of Tacitus. Be this as it may, indulge not in any strokes of satire; bring forward only those faults which, probably, your Readers might not, otherwise, perceive; and avoid acting

acting the disgusting part of a declaimer when you relate an odious and infamous event.

Upon some occasions, Truth does not put on an air of probability; and this circumstance is sufficient to induce an Historian (who plumes himself upon being a Philosopher, yet, certainly, has not too much studied and investigated the strange turns and inconsistencies of the human mind, and the caprices of our passions and of fortune) to reject as an error every occurrence which he deems extraordinary; and this is the manner of Voltaire. Another, sufficiently docile to his own imagination to remain extremely limited in his judgment, would wish to embellish the History and render it more animated and affecting by putting a layer of the marvellous upon the facts which he relates. For example, I might naturally want to have the conspiracy of the Count de Fiesque conceived, managed and conducted in exact conformity to the relation of it by Cardinal de Retz, in a work written during the earlier part of his youth. Unless I were the most infatuated of all the Conspirators,

spirators, I should not be able in the least to comprehend the several *manœuvres* of the Count de Fiesque. The marvellous with which the Historian has endeavoured to astonish and to interest my feelings must appear as a wild delirium; and, therefore, far from applauding, I shall blame him for not having suppressed this folly of the imagination when age and experience had matured his judgment.

In a History which does not seem in chace of the marvellous, we, sometimes, find an air of Romance that, certainly, disfigures it. What Reader can give credit to the Don Carlos of Abbé de St. Real, and to his narrative of Piso against Nero? The Romancer betrays himself in every page; and, perhaps, this idea follows me, in spite of my endeavours to desert it, when I read those works where Saint Real is *only* the Historian. I am apprehensive of too easily relinquishing my confidence to a Writer who has tried to sport with my credulity, and who made no scruple at once to spoil the History and the Romance

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by their insipid intermixture. With how much stronger reason, therefore, should I forbid an Author, remarkable for producing works which violently injure manners and morality, to presume to write History; unless, indeed, by the great efforts of a superior understanding, he could, like Sallust, attain to the power of separating himself from his vices, of condemning them, and of presenting to mankind the truths which it behoves them most to know? Whatsoever betrays a baseness of the mind is detrimental to the Historian who wishes to instruct and entertain me. Unless I suffer him to seduce and to corrupt me, I *must* despise him.

But, for the present, let us drop the subject of morality, and confine our observations to the art of the Historian. If an Epic Poet, on the point of bringing his Deities into action, and of creating Heroes, according to his fancy, would render himself ridiculous, were he to give us an exordium replete with egotism and parade, how much more is it the duty of an Historian, who brings forward upon
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the scene only mere men, to conduct himself with a greater degree of modesty? Imitate Livy. If, by chance, I should seem, in your opinion, too severe, let me refer you, in my defence, to Lucian. He ridiculed the Historians of his time who promised to treat their Readers with wonders; and he compared them to children diverting themselves by putting on the mask of Hercules or of Titan. "Take care (he subjoins) not to place the head of the Colossus of Rhodes upon the body of a Dwarf." Why, therefore, should I not become disgusted at reading, in the title-page of a Work: *The political and philosophical History?* I could lay a wager that the Historian must, unavoidably, throw before us a censurable production, because he discovers his ignorance that every rational History should, without affecting to appear as such, be philosophical and political. Does another Writer, in his epigraph, invoke august and sacred Truth to descend from Heaven for the purpose of instructing Kings? The prophecy of Horace will be accomplished:

..... *Nascetur ridiculus mus.*

Doubtless,

Doubtless, the Historian, to deserve the confidence of his Readers, should *appear* enlightened ; but, thoroughly to preserve this *appearance*, he must, in fact, *be* what he *seems*: An ignorant Writer will struggle to make a *shew* of knowledge to little purpose. His ignorance will break through the veil, on every side. Voltaire, for instance, is determined to *appear* filled with knowledge ; and assures me that he has read our ancient Capitularies ; but, is it possible that *I*, who, *also*, have perused these monuments of our History, can give credit to his affirmation ? Not to violate good manners, and accuse him, in direct terms, of having uttered falsities, can I resist the compulsion to think that he, sometimes, misunderstood, or even did not understand at all the passages which he read ? To prove to me, in another place, how much his criticism is circumspect and severe, he will tell me that the story of Lucretia does not, in *his* opinion, appear supported by exceedingly unquestionable authorities, like that of the daughter of Count Julian. In order to evince the propriety of this remark, he adds that it

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is, generally, as difficult to prove as to commit a rape. A tasteless humorist might, perhaps, laugh at such a wretched pleasantry; but, it must, certainly, dishonour the page of History. There is an easy and contemptible kind of erudition with which only an ignorant Writer imagines that he can adorn his work. Why, in the life of Charles the Twelfth, does he inform me that, in the Turkish language, *Balta* signifies an axe, and *Coumour* a coal? I, doubtless, must receive a fund of pleasure from knowing that the Tartars call their Prince (whom we stile *Kan*) *Han*, and that *Jussut* means *Joseph*. We chuse to name the celebrated Sage whom the Chinese have regarded with a kind of religious reverence, *Confucius*. I believe that, in this particular, we are our own masters; and, surely, the change in the orthography or pronunciation of a name can never lead to a material error. All this, however, does not signify; for, Monsieur de Voltaire, whose exactitude is carried to the most scrupulous extremes, informs us that we maim the appellation of this Philosopher, and that he was called

called *Cong-fut-see*. As if the French were not at liberty to regulate their language as they might think fit, he wanted them to call *les échecs* (the game of chess) *le jeu de stack*. To shew that he is not less a proficient in the Italian than in the Arabian, the Turkish and the Chinese language, he chuses to name the person whom the French stile *Christophe Colomb*, *Colombo*. Why, therefore, does he not change the words which, in *his* language, are *Rome* and *Londres*, to *Roma* and *London*? All these *fine* instances of erudition, undoubtedly, have their value. But, Readers exist of so nice a taste, and so difficult to be pleased that they could have wished that the Historian had proved less lavish of these specimens of knowledge, and reserved them intirely for himself.

The whole of this wretched parade of learning makes a Writer appear ridiculous; but, if his erudition were even accompanied by a more refined taste, he should conceal it from me unless I want it. A Reader of common penetration and experience will soon form a judgment concerning the capacity of
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the Historian. Notwithstanding that, in some Histories, I have not discovered those gross faults which are the unequivocal marks of ignorance, I believe that the limited abilities and knowledge of the Author have not escaped my notice. I am at a loss to account for it; but, I desired something more. The facts appeared to me abridged and mutilated. Amidst this species of obscurity, my mind was not at ease; and I distrusted the talents and the experience of my Historian. On the contrary, in other works, I imagined that I could perceive the Author, at least equal, if not rising superior to his subject matter; and, to produce this fortunate effect, it frequently happens that only a single word or one short remark is wanting which mixes with the narration, yet, does not lessen its rapidity. An excellent critique is the torch of History; but, Abbé Fleury had, never, more reason on his side than when he compared it to scaffolds, which the workmen are obliged to raise to facilitate the construction of an edifice, and which they take down when the latter is completed. Conceal your critique; it will disgust and

and fatigue the majority of your Readers. Your modesty will not hurt your reputation. Rest assured that the learned who, alone, in process of time, determine upon the fate of Historians, will do you justice; and occasion your work to be read, praised and admired even by the ignorant.

In the History of the League of Cambray, are you not actually disappointed in reading the long discussions of Abbé du Bos to clear up some mistake or other, of little importance, and which has occasioned Varillas to confound together two treaties? This was not worth the pains to check the narration which never can proceed too rapidly. Let us always remember that the Reader, at once idle and impatient, seeks for truth, but will not sit in judgment upon a trial. It would have been sufficient if Abbé du Bos, not endeavouring to rectify the error, had taken care to avoid the commission of the fault either of Guicciardini, or of Varillas. The next time that you read over this History, do me the favor to tell me whether your attention does
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not flag over the prolix discussion of the Historian concerning the authenticity of the speech which Justinian made to the Emperor Maximilian? If, in the opinion of Abbé du Bos, the speech appears rational, true and authentic, let him report it. Does he consider it as the offspring of the imagination of Guicciardini, and ill suited to the courage and the wisdom of the Venetians? Let him take no notice of it; or, rather, let him compose from it a better speech. Is a fact differently related by two Writers of equal authority, and have you no motive for preferring the one to the other? Produce a specimen of the two modes in which the narrative has been given. The Reader, judging favorably of your talents, discernment and circumspection, will become satisfied and offer you the tribute of his applause. But, remember to avoid entering into a discussion touching those arguments which may have been advanced for the purpose of supporting the authenticity of each of these two different relations. It is, indeed, a misemployment of the time to strive to hang the fact like a dead weight upon my attention; and

and this, merely for the sake of convincing me that I shall understand it no better than yourself, who have not actually placed it upon the ground of truth.

We have granted that, in order to instruct, it is necessary to please; and, if the Historian has that delicate taste, that refined attention to the preservation of the affinities and connections without which, notwithstanding all that men of brilliant imaginations may advance to the contrary, it is impossible to prove a Writer of genius, he will naturally conceive that History does not suffer an undistinguished and thoughtless admission of all kinds of ornaments: *caput artis decere*. Constantly noble, and by turns simple, majestic and sublime, History does not assume the same tone for all occurrences. We become fatigued by the continual antitheses of Velleius Paterculus and Florus; and still greater are the lassitude and disgust which we experience at perusing those exclamations which betray a weak and narrow judgment, unless they are introduced with much propriety, and, as it were, snatched up
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by a correct and well-tempered admiration. Whilst I am deeply affected with the magnanimity of mind displayed by Codrus, who devotes himself to the preservation of the Athenians, and strips off the marks of royalty that he may not be spared by the enemy; *quis non miretur* (exclaims Patereulus) *qui his artibus quæsierit, quibus ab ignavis vita quæri solet?* My pleasure vanishes, and I become incensed against an Historian whose unworthy amusement is to draw together distant ideas and to make a parade of the brilliancy of his imagination. Give me leave to trouble you with one more example, and we will dispense with all the rest. After the battle of Pharsalia, Pompey determines to retire in to Egypt. Now, listen to Patereulus. *Sed quis in adversis beneficiorum servat memoriam? aut quis ullam calamitosi debere putat gratiam? aut quando fortuna non mutat fidem?* And, most undoubtedly, this Writer was well employed in heaping three exclamations, the one upon the other, concerning a point so common and trifling as the political ingratitude of Princes and of States; and as the general ingratitude of mankind!

Florus

Florus has all the defects of Paterculus; and I am almost sorry that I promised you not to make him the subject of my remarks. Be this as it may, both the one and the other aim often, but unseasonably, to entertain us with their witticisms. Yet, neither of them has had the presumption to observe, like Voltaire in his Universal History, that *children are not formed by strokes of the pen*. On the contrary, even *they* would have regarded it as dishonorable to descend to so indecent a buffoonery. In this Work you will find a multitude of pleasantries which are not *bad*. They, sometimes, are full of humour; and I should approve of them in a Comedy or a Satire; but, they are misplaced; and, consequently, impertinent in Histories. Monsieur de Voltaire is the first Writer who wished to transplant into these the graces of his gaiety and his wit; but, to apply this sportive levity of language to all which is of the most importance, and, sometimes, the most afflicting to mankind, discovers a want of taste and a defect in judgment. I cannot avoid thinking that in a mind not more than usually chaste

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and

and liberal we should never meet with any of these deviations from the point of delicacy. Such a disposition would warn the Historian not to sacrifice his cooler understanding to loose and lively fallies, and the Reader not to applaud those strokes of humour which are even more injurious to morality than to refined and well-directed taste.

I believe that, in the discussion of a grave subject, it is not difficult to avoid playing the Buffoon; but, certainly, much judgment and much taste are requisite to enable the Historian to reject particulars brilliant in themselves, yet not proper for insertion. Quintus Curtius has several of these beauties, or rather of these rich and sparkling pieces with which he, surely, might have dispensed; for, sometimes, he appears to possess all the taste and all the elevation of mind peculiar to Livy and to Sallust.

Scribendi rectè, sapere est principium et fons.

And, before we quit this subject, give me leave to mention to you a circumstance which happened to me some years ago, and which

is

is too deeply engraven upon my mind ever to be forgotten. Paying a visit to one of my friends, I found him earnestly engaged on the perusal of a quarto volume. "Permit me" (said he) "to read to you an admirable piece with which I am perfectly enchanted." And, immediately, I heard him recite a kind of hymn to Love. "Indeed (I exclaimed) your encomium is just. This Ode in prose appears extremely beautiful." When my friend desired that he might read it to me once more, I rose in haste to discover the title of this precious Quarto. What did I observe? The Natural History Then, all my pleasure vanished. "Ah! Pliny!" (I could not avoid remarking) "is it thus that you have treated Natural History, which requires even more simplicity than any other." My friend endeavoured to prove to me that his Maker of Odes was in the right; that these beauties scattered within a work impart to it a splendid air, and discover that the Author, whose abilities are not limited to one line, is superior to the matter concerning which he writes. He added that

no inconsiderable share of genius was requisite to make up the art of re-animating the attention of the Reader by such *agreeable digressions*!

On this occasion, I judged it best to remain silent. My friend would not have understood me, if, during that moment, I had remarked to him that no sentiments should gain admission into a work which are not actually congenial with its nature, and that he had strangely prostituted the term *agreeable digressions*. So much the worse for him, if the narrative of the Historian proves sufficiently tedious, dull, heavy and insipid to reduce him to the necessity of endeavouring, by the introduction of extraneous matter, to alleviate the disgust and lassitude of the Reader. The digression concerning Cybele, to which Herodian recurs, in his first book, is comprized within two pages; and, as an apology for its insertion, the Historian, aware of its inutility, remarks that it will please the Greeks, the majority of whom were not conversant with the subject of the Roman Antiquities. Herodian, also, concludes by observing: that
enough,

enough, and, perhaps, too much has been said concerning the Goddess. This attempt at vindication is a proof that the Historian thought that it was scarcely possible to be too moderate and guarded in taking the liberty to launch out from the main subject of the Work. In a particular History, the Author must lay a prohibition upon himself not to enter into the least digression; and, in a general History, it should occur but seldom. Do not ever introduce it, during the moment when you have opened the relation of some great event; but, reserve it for the conclusion, when the curiosity of the Reader shall have been fully gratified. In conformity to this principle, Livy (if I recollect aright) confines himself to two digressions; the one concerning Alexander, whom he regards as waging war against the Romans; and, notwithstanding that this little deviation from the leading point throws into a clearer light the circumstances, the interests and the fate of the Republic, he asks pardon of the Reader for having ventured to introduce it. The second digression relates to Philoppon. It is an honorable tribute

which he pays to the memory of the last of the Greeks; yet, he signifies his apprehensions lest he should have committed a fault and trespassed against the law by which he forbade himself to launch out into the discussion of such matters as appeared foreign to his subject.

When a Writer is engaged upon a rich and fertile History, why does he venture upon incursions which are beyond its *proper limits*? Granting the matter to be barren, it follows that he acted wrong in making it the object of his choice, nor was it possible that he could have repaired this first error by giving a loose to unserviceable digressions. Whatsoever is not necessary to bring me acquainted either with a nation, a particular event, or some illustrious personage, each, in their turns, the object of the remarks of the Historian, should be suppressed without mercy. For example, in the life of Rienzi, what have I to do with that long digression concerning the plague which overspread and desolated all Europe, in the year 1348, and the relation of
which

which Du Cerceau most ridiculously tacks to his Work, by observing that Providence permitted Rienzi to escape from the contagion, because he was destined to contribute to the chastisement of the Romans? Are you going to enter upon the description of a war raging within a new country? Inform me only of that which is requisite to give me a just idea of its resources, riches, manners, morals and character, together with that kind of hostilities which, with a view to conquest, it might appear the most politic to direct against it. Describe to me in the gross Provinces either open or intersected by Rivers, Mountains or Defiles; but, do not waste the time amidst details of a topographical description; and, above all things, take care lest you turn Naturalist.

We continually read Histories with pleasure, because the events which they include are curious. *Historia quoque modo scripta debet.* This, *Theodosius!* you have experienced. But, we perceive, more than words can express, that an enlightened Reader, hav-

ing once satisfied his curiosity, will not return to a perusal of the work, unless the Author discovers, by his manner of treating the subject, that he enjoys the art of pleasing and of exciting the attention. Is the Historian desirous not only that we should read it over and over again, and, as it were, for ever, under the conception of its being replete with novelty and attraction? Let him learn to become a great Painter of those passions which govern the World, and from which, although Philosophy instructs us to keep them in a subserviency to our own directions, she never can deliver us. It is by such portraits that an History becomes animated. I am no longer a perusing Reader; but a Spectator, who perceives events in the act of passing immediately before him. My heart, *properly* on fire, communicates to my mind a kind of heat by which it is illuminated; and, thus, penetrating through forms and all the different veils under which passions remain disguised, I find them reproducing each other, always the same, yet always new; and throwing a prodigious diversity amongst the events which have

have been, which are, and which will prove eternally the same and eternally varying.

In vain will the Historian aspire to the possession of the merit concerning which I am speaking, if he has not studied with the most particular and successful attention not only the nature, the movement and the course of the passions, but the manner in which they become intermingled, are confounded with each other, enter into reciprocal modifications, and borrow from government, laws and public manners, a different character. Would you paint for me the Spartans and the Athenians, the Romans and the Carthaginians, our Ancestors and our Contemporaries with the same colors? You would not expect to give me more than an exceedingly imperfect idea of the originals; and I should continue ignorant of the causes of events and revolutions. *Poets* and *Orators* may shew themselves impassioned; and it is, on these occasions, that they only fulfil their duty, because the passions communicate themselves to each other, and because a powerful appeal to

them is the principal object of the *former*. But, it is otherwise with the Historian. *He* must preserve the utmost coolness. *His* are the depositions of a witness; and if a witness is anxious to obtain belief, he must not speak in the language of the passions. I compare the Historian to a Painter who does not appear upon the canvas which he animates by his touches, but who should there present to me the personages whose features and attitudes discover their thoughts and all the agitations of their mind. I can, also, trace the similitude between the Historian and the Dramatic Poet who does not himself come forward upon the stage, but who there introduces confusion, affliction and the regulated disorders of the passions.

It is in this picture of the human heart that we may discover the admirable accomplishments of Livy, Sallust, and Tacitus. All becomes animated under a single stroke of *their* pens; and, if I am capable of thinking, my mind is in perpetual employment. From the moment that the public indignation has overthrown the tyranny of Tar-

quin,

quin, I perceive arising from it a vast multitude of passions which, by encountering and clashing with each other, will give to the Republic that character of grandeur, of power and of courage which must lead to her destruction, after having rendered her the Mistress of the World. It is from the art with which an Historian unravels the progress of the passions, their alternate calmness and the violence of their transport that we perceive an interest resulting which ennobles the most common events, and imparts a diversity to those which would, perhaps, have appeared, in *my* opinion, too similar. When I observe that our modern Historians freeze up the attention of their readers, because they are strangers to the means of searching for our passions in the bottom of our hearts, I am answered that they have not the force and majesty of those of the Greeks and Romans. I grant it; but, meditating upon Tacitus and his manner of presenting various objects, why do not our Historians learn to avail themselves of the vilest, the most irrational and the most abject passions, and to take care that the picture of even any

of

of these may have its allurements, its use and value?

*The living serpent from whose form, appall'd,
we fly,*

In imitative art attracts the ravish'd eye.

Will not Claudius, Nero, Women plunged in debauchery, Strollers, Freed-men who govern their Masters whilst they tremble, and Senators as debased as *them* secure from me a kind of attention, when their passions are well painted, and when I discover that the fate of the World depends upon their influence and their operations? Freedom, indeed, gives to the passions an activity, together with a bold and high-spirited tone which is favorable to the great views of History; and of Despotism, it is observed that it benumbs and chains up the passions. This is a mistake. The passions, though more timid, are not less active; for *Man* is always *Man*. They are more circumspect, more crafty and more replete with dissimulation. Why, therefore, following the example of Tacitus, do not our Historians spread light over the darkness

ness in which these passions remain concealed?

I sometimes endeavour to account for the reason why our Historians, Abbé de Vertot excepted, throw me into kind of torpor from which I cannot extricate myself without considerable difficulty. It is (unless I am mistaken) because, not even moderately satisfying my reason, they never seek to move those passions which would attach me to the perusal of their work. It has been said to the Poets: "If you are desirous that I should weep, let your Heroes themselves shed tears." I apply a similar observation to the Historians. "If you are willing that I should feel the attraction of your writings, do not convert your personages into puppets, who are acted upon by springs concealed behind the curtain. Shew me their very souls, that I may either love or hate them. Discover to me their passions and I shall become a sharer in their emotions." How powerfully and successfully have Livy and Sallust availed themselves of speeches in order that they

they might fill my mind with the sentiments of those characters concerning whose actions they present me with the relation ! By the force of some magic charm which it is impossible to describe, I find myself transported into the midst of the smoking ruins of Rome, after the retreat of the Gauls, when I conceive that I hear, when, indeed, I actually *do* hear the voice of Camillus who stops his fellow-citizens, then on the point of flying from their desolated country, and of seeking for an establishment at Veii. Under these circumstances, I adore an Historian who renders me worthy to think like Camillus, whose abilities and virtues I admire. I cite to you the first examples which present themselves to my memory. Is there a narration more animated, more sublime and interesting than that of Papirius, who is inclined to punish Fabius, his General of the Cavalry, for having conquered in disobedience to his orders ? Do I not participate in the sentiments of the army, of old Fabius, of the Senate and of the People ? All these emotions succeed rapidly to each other ; and no scene upon the Theatre can more forcibly

cibly affect me. If, in Sallust, Marius had not harangued the People, I should have lost the opportunity of following him into Africa, with that ardor, that pleasure and that interest for which I am indebted to the genius of the Historian.

Give me leave to present you, from the account of the Catilinarian conspiracy, in Sallust, with a picture of the trouble and agitation of Rome, when the Senate had disposed of the Body-Guards in different quarters of the city, under the command of the inferior Magistrates.

Quibus rebus permota civitas, atque immutata facies urbis erat: ex summa lætitia atque lascivia, quæ diuturna quies pepererat, repente omnes tristitia invasit. Festinare, trepidare: neque loco, neque homini cuiquam satis credere: neque bellum gerere, neque pacem habere: suo quisque metu pericula metiri. Ad hoc, mulieres quibus pro Reipublicæ magnitudine belli timor insolitus inceserat, afflictare sese; manus supplices ad cælum tendere; miserari parvos liberos; rogare; omnia pavere: superbia atque deliciis omissis, sibi patriæque diffidere. Are you

not

not affected? Do you not feel with a redoubled force the interest which you take in the affairs of Rome? I think that the Historian at once strikes upon my imagination, and searches into my heart for those passions which fill it with such sensible emotions. Nor can I, now, avoid recollecting the observations of Tacitus concerning the seditious army whom it was necessary to bring back to a sense of their duty. *Stabat Drusus silentium manu poscens. Milites, quotiens oculos ad multitudinem retulerant, vocibus truculentis strepere; rursum, viso Cesare, trepidare: murmur incertum: atrox clamor et repente quies: diversis animorum motibus pavebant, terrebantque.* On this occasion, even in despite of any inclination to the contrary, I must, I do become attentive. My curiosity is awakened, and remains suspended between the different passions by which the soldiers themselves are agitated. Read the Life of Germanicus; mark the description of the pompous grief of Agrippina, and a thousand other passages equally beautiful. Then, will alternate pity and terror engrave more deeply upon your heart and mind the lessons

lessons which the Historian strives to teach you.

You will not discover any thing equal to this in the Works of our modern Historians. But, recollect, that I always except Abbé de Vertot. The Histories of the Conspiracy at Venice, and of the conspiracy of the Gracchi, by Abbé de Saint Real were equal to the excitement of all these emotions. But, the Writer addresses himself only to your reason; and, therefore, your tranquil imagination can never fix upon those objects which are connected with his narrative. In another part of the History, is it necessary to refer to Marius, who, having been recalled by Cinna, reigns like a Tyrant in Rome? He merely tells you that *he cannot express the pitiable situation of the City, in times the most unfortunate which it is possible to conceive them.* So much for this insipid passage, at the close of which I naturally fall asleep. On similar occasions, the Majority of our Historians make some efforts to imitate the great models of antiquity; but, their eloquence is, at the best, a cold declamation, and this
affected

affected heat serves only to freeze up my powers of attention. Never increase, at the expence of alterations of the truth, the embarrassments and the dangers of the personages in whose fate you are desirous that I should become interested. I must consider you as the fair object of my laughter; I must look with scorn upon your judgment, if, following the example of Florus, you should describe to me, as the greatest of calamities, a situation from which, as it appears to *me*, I could extricate myself with tolerable ease. Dwell not either more or less upon the relation of an event, but, in proportion to its being either more or less worthy of the attention of a rational Reader. Yet, when difficulties multiply and grow nearly insurmountable, be particularly careful not to assume an air of eloquence. It is then that the Historian should adopt a stile and manner of all others the most simple. From this simplicity must result a species of the sublime; and you will attach me to your side by so irresistible a claim to admiration. Although not liking Cæsar, to whose unjust projects I am no stranger, it is with pleasure

that

that I perceive him struggle against perils, and triumph over them by that prodigious celerity and that courage which rise constantly superior to events. In *my* opinion, the modesty of Xenophon adds a redoubled lustre to his merit. I find it impossible to contemplate, with a mind at ease, the fate of the ten thousand Greeks who followed the young Cyrus into the heart of Asia, until I perceive them returned to their own country. After having felt more anxiety than their Generals, I, at length, become a participator in their joy when they discover and hail that fortunate ocean which is to transport them into Greece.

Livy, in an History which embraces several centuries, and brings before us so many examples of the most distinguished success and of the deepest disgrace, of the most exalted virtues and of the most abandoned vices, appears to have drained all the resources of genius and of art. Continually does he interest and attract me; and never do I find myself fatigued by the perusal of his work. Wherefore? Because no Historian has ever proved
more

more expert in animating his narration by the art of painting the passions of his characters and of affecting mine. He is perpetually sure of succeeding, because, whilst he investigates the nature of events, he avails himself of those circumstances which are the most proper either to excite my attention or to raise a variety of emotions in my heart. I am not an indifferent spectator of the battle between the Horatii and the Curiatii; and I take, on this occasion, my share in the fears and hopes of the Roman Army. Do you recollect the case of those troops which pass under the yoke of slavery at the Furcæ Caudinæ? The exasperated Soldiers are on the point of taking vengeance for this humiliation by tearing into pieces their Consuls, and they load them with maledictions. Yet, on a sudden, their tempers are converted from rage into pity, when these Magistrates, half naked, without arms and unaccompanied by Lictors, have not only lost their own Majesty, but debased the Majesty of the Republic. Then is it that the Soldiers turn their eyes aside, and in the ignominy which attends their Consuls, forget and lose their own. I
per-

perceive only a consternation attended by the deepest grief and those violent emotions of irresistible resentment which are the warnings and the forerunners of some great and striking act of vengeance.

What reader would not feel, in the most forcible degree, the manner in which Livy prepares him for the relation of the battle of Zama, which was to terminate an obstinate war between the two most powerful Republics in the world? Hannibal and Scipio have an interview: *paulisper alter alterius conspectu, admirationis mutua propè attoniti, conticuere*. Read the speech of Hannibal and the answer of Scipio. Then, will you feel sentiments of admiration; then, will you wait with a degree of silent fear the event of a battle which is to change the face of the World. How is it possible that I can remain tranquil when I read of the departure of the Consul Licinius to conduct the war against the Persians. Crouds of People press eagerly upon the General, and look, with deep attention, at the person in whose hands are invested the dispo-

sal

sal of the good or ill fortune of the Public.
 I share in his inquietudes, and reflect, like
him, on the precarious consequences of hos-
 tilities. Like *him* I hesitate, and dare not act
 exclusively in obedience to the dictates of any
 one thought or determination. Will the Con-
 sul, who descends from the Capitol, after
 having offered to the Gods his sacrifices upon
 the altars which are within it, return to the
 same edifice, and take his seat in the triumphal
 chair? Or, rather, will he not himself pre-
 pare a triumph for his enemies? I call to
 mind all the glory, the grandeur and the power
 of the ancient Macedonians. I float between
 fear and hope; and I wait with impatience
 for the relation of the events concerning which
 the Historian is preparing to inform me. It
 is by this art, not to be imitated, but, for
 which he must seek in the sensibility of his
 heart, and the elevation of his mind, that Livy
 perpetually imparts a novelty to the Work.
 With facts in the gross, I am not unacquaint-
 ed; but these inestimable details would escape
 from my recollection; nor do I ever alight
 upon

upon them without becoming more and more contented both with the Historian and myself.

Perhaps, I fatigue you; but, I *must* beg leave to call to your remembrance that admirable picture of the defeat of Perseus, or rather of the moment when this Prince enters as a prisoner into the tent of Paulus Æmilius. Observe with what address Livy prepares the contrasts which are to strike with powerful impressions upon my mind. The Roman Soldiers whose thirst and pride of conquest are not glutted by perceiving so powerful a monarch in their chains, imagine that they triumph over Alexander the Great and his Father. Whilst I give myself up to these magnificent ideas, Perseus, who appears to me only as one of the last and least of mankind, throws himself at the feet of the Consul who raises him; nor has he the power of answering but with tears to the goodness of Paulus Æmilius, who turns away his eyes from this affecting sight. "*You perceive*" (he observes to the young Romans who surround him) "*a most striking example of the instability of*"
 "human

"human affairs. Let us continue modest in prof-
 "perity, because we are ignorant of the future
 "lot which fortune is preparing for us; and may
 "this modesty teach us to support with virtuous
 "constancy and resolution the change from happi-
 "ness to calamity." I take my part in this
 lesson, although, in some degree, it extends
 to persons raised above the rank of private
 life. Thus drawn into a train of thinking,
 I do not stop at the ruin of Persius, but I
 carry my attention to the fall of Macedonia.
 "And to this" (do I remark) "must so many
 "wars, systems of politics, virtues and vices
 "come at last! Then, there is no power
 "which is not destined to be dashed to pieces!"
 I pity the Romans who raised with so much
 labor an empire decreed to fall by its own
 powers and under its own weight. Livy is
 full of these beauties. We find them in every
 page; and it is by constantly raising emotions
 in my heart that he so deeply imprints upon
 my mind the great truths by which he has
 enlightened me.

The

The second mean of pleasing is to render your narration rapid. Never will you succeed by mutilating facts ; but, you leave me a hundred things to desire, betraying in your work a want of taste and judgment approaching to sterility. Do not neglect any of those circumstances which are proper to bring me to the knowledge of the nature of an event by which my feelings are interested ; but, dispose of them with such skill and prudence that they may not in the least embarrass one another. You must have observed Historians (Mr. Gibbon, for example) who get entangled within their subject ; are at a loss how either to open or to conclude it, and, as it were, turn perpetually upon themselves. The one, for want of order, cannot attain to the power of connecting their events, and waste much time and many words upon a cold and tedious transition. The others most unseasonably attempt to pass themselves off for Philosophers, because, in fact, they have not a grain of true philosophy within their minds ; and thus do they fatigue me by their reflections. Livy is, sometimes, satisfied with insinuating to his

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Reader

Reader the necessity of contemplating the subject which is before him. Instead of expatiating upon a trivial and common truth, he rests contented with observing, *ut fit*: as it commonly happens; and this *ut fit* gives pleasure to *all* Readers; to those of enlightened understandings, because it is short; and to others, because it affords them an opportunity of meditating upon a truth which they imagine that they have discovered. The Barcinian faction having gained the ascendancy over their enemies, the Carthaginians gave orders, after the battle of Cannæ, for the succors which Hannibal demanded. *Hæc* (adds the Historian) *in secundis rebus segniter otioseque gesta*. Livy never detaches his reflections except when they prove of the greatest importance, and merit the *whole* attention of the Reader. The occasions for such deviations are rare; and of one in particular give me leave to present you with an example. Scipio, finding it extremely inconvenient to retain within his army a number of auxiliary troops, even much greater than the military force of the Romans then in camp; *id quidem* (ob-
serves

(erves Livy) *cavendum semper Romanis ducibus erit, exemplaue hæc pro documentis habenda, ne ita externis credant auxiliis, ut non plus sui roboris suarumque proprie virium in castris habeant.*

Were you to write for children, I could excuse your entering into such long reflections as those of Monsieur Rollin; and I should even praise them, because the point is to train up a mind as yet incapable of meditating with propriety. But, if you write for persons worthy to read History, and who endeavour to improve a cultivated understanding, adopt the manner of the great Historians concerning whom we have already spoken. Disguise your reflections; at one moment, you must teach me what I ought to think, by giving me an account of public opinions; and, at another moment, you must impart to your remarks an air of fact. The art has not remained totally unknown to modern Historians; and of this truth Buchanan, Grotius and Freinshemius will furnish you with an hundred examples. Fra-Paolo is a perfect model of this kind. *A Prince weak and li-*

mitted in his abilities (observes Father Rougeant when he mentions James the First, King of England) *who was fond of negotiating, because he disliked war ; and who, for that very reason, always proved a bad negotiator.* How many of our Philosophers, could they have gained possession of such a thought, would have insipidly spun it out to the length of three or four pages ! In another place, he tells us that *Gustavus marches on at the head of his army with that confidence which promises, and which, sometimes, gives victory.* I think I have already remarked that in proportion to the erudition and taste of Historians they become more concise and rapid in their reflections when they make them in their own name.

I should advise an Historian to chuse, after having meditated upon his art by studying the great models, to chuse a subject suitable and adequate to his abilities. A general History requires such a multitude of different talents that it were temerity to undertake it, unless an author felt within himself that happy facility of genius which embraces and draws together

together the richest sources of knowledge, and possesses the art of throwing them into the most agreeable forms and points of view. Has not the Historian all those strokes of genius, all those perfections of language and of style which are to render him perpetually equal to the matter concerning which he treats, and to spread from page to page that enchanting variety which sustains and animates the Reader throughout the course of a long work? He may *instruct*, but he cannot *please*. It appears to me that Thucydides, Sallust and Tacitus would, in despite of all their merit, have proved tiresome in a general History of Greece and Rome. Their faculties seem infinitely less flexible than those of Livy; they appear to have possessed a more decided character, and a manner from which they could not have separated themselves without losing some portion of their merit. The great man knows his limits and never attempts to run beyond them. Having once studied the secrets of his art, in order that he may extend and guide his genius, he gives a loose to its impulse; and even amidst his errors we discover

9 graces for the sake of which the former receive our pardon. Such is Plutarch. Never did an Historian display more address in chusing subjects adapted to his talents and his genius. A noble simplicity, which he considers as inseparable from truth and solid worth, secures to him the confidence, or rather the friendship of his Readers. We imagine, not that we read his lives, but that we enter with him into familiar conversation; and we actually hear him. We forgive him; but, why do I say forgive him? We thank him for the length of his reflections. He, sometimes, stops me to inform me of things to which I believe that I should have recurred without his assistance; but I perceive that I could not have expressed myself so ably as he has done, and I applaud myself for thinking like an Historian whom I revere. We allow him his digressions, because we are not impatient to arrive at the death of his Hero, as at the close of a toilsome war or a calamitous revolution. It is extremely dangerous to attempt to imitate an Historian whose graces, if I may be allowed the expression, are always the next neighbors

neighbors to some defect. I must compare Plutarch to La Fontaine, who is the most accomplished of all Fabulists. To attempt to imitate were to burlesque him; and it is impossible to acquire his graces unless we previously possess his genius. I should rather advise an imitator to fix on Phædrus, because, even without succeeding, an endeavour to tread in his steps might not render him ridiculous.

Style is an essential part of History; for, it is almost useless to think well, if we cannot express ourselves to advantage. Let your language be sometimes more elevated and sometimes more simple, in proportion to the greater or less considerable degree of importance peculiar to the subject. Have words at command; and avoid those slow and tedious periods which are so familiar to the generality of our Historians. Learn to vary them with your expressions. This is the only secret for acquiring that abundance which Cicero recommends to Writers, because it charms their Readers and does not ever tire them. Do not

not embarrass your progress by parentheses. Mark out your periods into unequal lengths. Hence arises harmony in our language, and without harmony, the style is never excellent. Let your expressions (observed Lucian to the Historians of *his* time) be understood by the People, and please Readers of a cultivated understanding: *erit rebus ipsis par et æqualis oratio*. Never did any author adhere more strictly and more successfully than Cicero to this law which he imposes upon all Writers. Livy has faithfully obeyed it, and united to each other the different qualities which we have admired in Herodotus and in Thucydides. At one moment, it is a torrent which dashes precipitately down, and, at another moment, a river which rolls its waters on with solemn majesty. You will but weakly strike upon the senses if you offend the ears; *voluptati aurium morigerari debet oratio*. Cicero reproached Thucydides because his matter was not enough connected, nor his periods sufficiently rounded. Tacitus has the same defect; but he makes amends for it by the greatest beauties. This I have experienced; I never quit Livy without

without concern; and, although, admiring Tacitus, I sometimes relinquish him without regret. A stile disjointed, unripped and incoherent is condemned as vicious by our Master in the art of Writing. "I could forgive
 "an author" (remarks Cicero) "if in each of
 "those phrases but ill calculated to follow the
 "one immediately after the other, it were
 "possible to find beauties similar to those
 "which were discernible in every part of the
 "buckler of Minerva (fabricated by Phidias)
 "when taken into pieces. The general economy of the Work might, indeed, be lost;
 "but, we should enjoy the pleasure of perceiving a variety of precious fragments, all
 "still worthy of our admiration."

Here, Cleanthes! ended our conversation; and I can venture to assure you that Theodosius was satisfied with my remarks. Cidamon, indeed, thought me too difficult to please; and would feel concern were I to write on this subject. He would even dread a dearth

of

of Historians. But, you and I should fear to find them in too great abundance; ~~not, however, without comforting ourselves upon a determination to avoid perusing them.~~

F I N I S.

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